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Knowledge management in the United Nations system

Note by the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General has the honour to transmit to the members of the General Assembly the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled, "Knowledge management in the United Nations system".

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KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

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• **Joint Inspection Unit**

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Knowledge management in the United Nations system

JIU/REP/2016/10

Knowledge: a strategic asset of the United Nations system

The review of knowledge management in the United Nations system is based on the conviction that knowledge is a valuable core asset of the United Nations system organizations and their best comparative advantage. The effective utilization of knowledge both in the organizations and system-wide is critical for achieving the goals of the system.

For the United Nations, knowledge constitutes an intangible and a concrete asset, an operational reality and a permanent aspiration, a general and a specific resource. The United Nations system is the generator and catalyst of a special kind of knowledge — one that is based on values. It is knowledge that makes cooperation possible among Member States — irrespective of their size and location — in so many areas of high complexity and diversity. Knowledge is acquired from lessons learned together with new ideas and concepts.

Purpose of the review

The main purpose of the review was to identify best practices to be considered, emulated and adapted in accordance with the resources and needs of each organization. From that perspective, the modest purview of the present report is a knowledge management exercise in itself as it showcases initiatives and experiences that already exist in the United Nations system.

The Inspector recommends solutions and proposes new approaches with respect to the system-wide recommendations made in JIU/REP/2007/6 on the same topic, which have not been implemented. He also recommends a common definition of knowledge management to be used by all United Nations system organizations and a minimum set of basic guidelines to assist each organization in the development of its own knowledge management strategy.

Knowledge management in the United Nations system: still work in progress

As a strategic resource, knowledge requires ongoing continual assessment of its use by means of an effective and productive management in order to ensure that it is optimal. Knowledge management remains a challenge for the United Nations system organizations in their attempt to systematically and efficiently develop, organize, share and integrate knowledge to achieve their cross-cutting goals.

Knowledge management is not yet a strategic priority in all United Nations system organizations and there are no common practices that are accepted or shared system-wide. Nevertheless, some organizations, such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the International Labour Organization (ILO) have comprehensive and time-tested practices, and knowledge management is part of their operational reality. Existing knowledge management strategies are continually adjusted and reformulated in the light of lessons learned from their implementation.

Conceptual clarifications

The chapter on conceptual background offers clarifications of basic concepts, such as data, information and knowledge. A wide array of specific mandate-oriented definitions of knowledge and knowledge management has been extracted from existing strategies and may be used to inspire other organizations.

The knowledge management strategies reviewed already represent a solid corpus of examples with many essential similarities, despite the diversity of the contexts in which they are used. The review of the conceptual approaches of various organizations proved that the lack of a common terminology is not a major obstacle in the pursuit of coherent and compatible system-wide approaches to knowledge management, provided that there is an underlying vision.

A knowledge management preparedness framework

The review used an ad hoc framework to assess the preparedness for knowledge management, based on five criteria:

a. The existence of a strategy and/or policy document and/or guidelines aimed at defining, institutionalizing and operationalizing knowledge management;
b. The integration, alignment or programmatic connection of such documents with other strategies and plans of action;
c. The explicit attribution of specific knowledge management-related responsibilities and competences to various units, managers and staff members;
d. The existence of policies aimed at enhancing the proactive engagement of staff in knowledge management;
e. The existence of direct or indirect positive impact on the efficiency of the organization's operations.

The need for a strategic vision

The review found that the main common element of a preparedness framework is the existence of a vision of knowledge management, irrespective of the form in which such vision is expressed. Indeed, some organizations have already adopted knowledge management strategies and, following different paths, have put in place basic elements of knowledge management at the conceptual or operational level. Where such strategies exist they include, to different extents, policies and measures addressing other elements of the preparedness framework.

At present, across the United Nations system, there are enough knowledge management strategies that have stood the test of time and relevance. Those strategies were developed by organizations that have complex institutional structures at headquarters, regional and national levels, and they can inspire or help other organizations in developing their own strategies as their scope and content can be adapted to the specific mandates of different organizations. The intellectual resources necessary to develop knowledge management strategies exist in all the organizations, at headquarters and in the field.

Measuring knowledge management impact

The review was not intended to impose a model, but rather to provide examples and appeal to United Nations system organizations to introduce and implement knowledge management strategies and policies based on existing practices in the United Nations system. However, unlike other policies that can be justified in terms of explicit and measurable monetary savings, the added value of knowledge

management is more difficult to quantify. Measuring the impact of knowledge management is a major challenge in designing and implementing knowledge management strategies and policies.

Knowledge management benefits are both far reaching and hard to measure. Knowledge management prevents waste of money, time and human resources and one cannot measure what is prevented. It is difficult to quantify the time spent in, or the cost of, finding the right information or reproducing knowledge that already exists or using obsolete instead of up-to-date information or investing in technology without assessing its potential to improve the availability and accessibility of knowledge. Overspending money is easily detected, but overspending time is almost neglected. Knowledge management benefits are not achieved directly nor overnight. The prevention of errors and the savings that are often achieved through better use and reuse of existing knowledge are practically invisible in accounting terms.

Negative consequences of ignoring knowledge management needs

It is easier to identify and underline the risks of not adopting a knowledge management strategy. Some negative consequences of ignoring knowledge management needs were identified during the interviews conducted by the Inspector with managers and representatives of staff associations, for example: duplication of efforts and activities by staff working in similar fields; inconsistency in the approaches or understanding of the same policy area; lack of awareness of the whole picture of a particular policy challenge; loss of knowledge and insight when experienced staff leave an organization; insufficient ability to share best practices and innovations; absence of interdepartmental or inter-agency collaborative work; failure to identify loss of time and resources.

Reinvention of the wheel

In order to reduce costs, organizations — large and small — need to continuously improve the way they capture, share and deliver their intellectual capital across departments, units, sectors and functions, at headquarters and in the field. Such improvement does not happen systematically and everywhere across the United Nations system. Some organizations still seem unable to extract themselves from costly functional silos and, instead, tolerate expensive duplications and reinventions of the wheel. The proliferation of uncoordinated or difficult to access repositories has often had a negative impact on staff's and decision makers' ability to find relevant content quickly as well as on the overall cost of content.

Knowledge management is less and less an optional tool for leaders

Knowledge management can be a very valuable tool not only for the executive heads of the organizations, but also for the governing bodies. Knowledge management helps to qualify and identify what the organization knows; where and in what form is the knowledge located; how organized is the access to knowledge; and what the best ways are to transfer knowledge to the right people at the right time. Knowledge management will help organizations learn from past failures and successes, redeploy and reuse existing knowledge assets, solve problems or innovate, foster and develop the right competencies, update and remove obsolete knowledge and ensure that knowledge and competencies are not lost.

Most of the United Nations system organizations consider themselves "knowledge-based" entities, yet they focus on explicit and quantifiable knowledge only

At present, there is an almost consensual view that knowledge is the main force that determines and drives the ability of private and public organizations to act efficiently, based on their comparative advantage in a highly competitive environment. Yet, one problem persists: many managers and professionals tend to focus on explicit and quantifiable knowledge only. Indeed, while well-

functioning information, archives and records management systems are part of effective knowledge management, even in the case of explicit knowledge, there is no consistent concern about the loss of knowledge in the process, from its creation to its use. There is also no formal control of the associated repetitive costs. Moreover, there are insufficient policies in place to retain tacit knowledge associated with human resources, which are subject to various forms of mobility.

Knowledge management within existing resources

An underlying assumption of the present report is that knowledge management can be improved within existing resources. Without ignoring the possible need to invest financial resources in knowledge management, the review paid special attention to the role of human resources as the prevailing factor in knowledge management processes. The Inspector believes that there is a latent virtuous circle that can be activated to valorise knowledge and human resources that are currently underutilized in each organization and system-wide. Efficient management of knowledge does not depend only on technology, but mainly on the human and managerial resources of the organization.

Knowledge management is — par excellence — a participative process, in which the personal proactive attitude of knowledge workers is essential. Formal action is a sine qua non condition, but without conscious involvement and awareness on the part of staff, a knowledge management system will not produce the expected results. Decisions and empowering guidelines and frameworks are essential to stimulate staff's involvement in knowledge creation, sharing and use.

Moreover, when organizations do not have policies aimed at retaining the institutional memory acquired by their staff over long years of individual and organizational practice, the loss of such tacit knowledge represents a devaluation of the human imprint on knowledge resources. Most of the interlocutors interviewed during the review admitted that there were losses and waste.

The survey on staff perception of knowledge management showed that the introduction and implementation of knowledge management strategies and practices had robust popular support in the United Nations system organizations.

Knowledge management in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The review found that knowledge management would be an important contribution to the implementation of the new holistic and collaborative approach on which the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is based. Indeed, knowledge can break down silos and be the most natural integrative factor system-wide and for all the stakeholders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

The United Nations is not just an honest broker and facilitator for donors and recipients of development assistance. The United Nations is a catalyst and a disseminator of knowledge. Knowledge management can be used as a tool for promoting interdepartmental, system-wide and multi-stakeholder collaboration. The present report contains information on good practices and initiatives in the area of knowledge management that can be utilized to improve access to knowledge and to bring together the inputs of the various stakeholders involved in sustainable development activities.

Action to be taken

The recommendations follow the structure of the preparedness framework and are aimed at enhancing the role of knowledge management in the service of the 2030 Agenda.

In view of their overarching goal, the recommendations can be clustered as follows:

- Filling the gaps in knowledge management system-wide, based on existing practices (recommendations 1 and 2);
- Valorising human resources and the knowledge acquired by staff in their organizations (recommendations 3 and 4);
- Stimulating common system-wide initiatives, in general, and in the specific context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (recommendations 5, 6, and 7).

Recommendation 7 is addressed to the General Assembly, recommendations 2 and 5 are addressed to the Secretary-General, in his capacity as head of the United Nations Secretariat, and recommendations 1, 3, 4 and 6 are addressed to the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations. When appropriate, The Inspector has made recommendations on actions to be taken in relation to the needs and resources of the organizations.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, should develop knowledge management strategies and policies aligned with the mandate, goals and objectives of their respective organizations, by the end of 2018. Such strategies should be based on an assessment of current and future knowledge management needs and include measures for implementation.

Recommendation 2

The Secretary-General, in consultation with the Senior Management Group, should develop at least a minimum set of knowledge management guidelines for the United Nations Secretariat, based on best practices and experiences in departments as well as in United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies, and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), by the end of 2018.

Recommendation 3

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, should take incremental measures aimed at embedding knowledge management skills and knowledge-sharing abilities in their respective staff performance appraisal systems, annual work plans, job descriptions and organizational core competences, by the end of 2020.

Recommendation 4

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, should establish norms and procedures for the retention and transfer of knowledge from retiring, moving or departing staff, as part of the organizations' succession planning processes.

Recommendation 5

The Secretary-General should take measures to optimize the potential of the United Nations System Staff College Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development by, inter alia, requesting the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the United Nations University (UNU) and the United Nations System Staff College Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development to jointly design

and conduct training programmes on knowledge management adapted to the holistic principles underlying the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such training programmes should promote, in an integrated way, the management of knowledge produced and intended for use by all stakeholders interested in or associated with the activities of the United Nations system.

Recommendation 6

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations with long-standing and comprehensive experience in knowledge management should take the lead in introducing in the agenda of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) an item dedicated to knowledge management so as to provide an opportunity for sharing, at a strategic level, experiences, good practices and lessons learned, with a view to gradually developing a common, system-wide knowledge management culture.

Recommendation 7

The General Assembly should include in its agenda an item or sub-item dedicated to knowledge management in the United Nations system and request that a report be submitted by the Secretary-General, with contributions from members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB), on system-wide best practices and initiatives in the area of knowledge management that support the holistic, integrated and collaborative approach of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

In addition, the Inspector has made the following suggestions and soft recommendations in paragraphs 136, 177, 190, 197, 231, 241 and 260 of the present report:

- The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, should assign responsibilities relating to the implementation of knowledge management and the monitoring of the knowledge resources at the corporate level. The organizational form that the assignment of such responsibilities takes (for example, separate units, interdepartmental teams, individual officials or other) should correspond to the specific needs of each organization and be adapted to the available resources (paragraph 136).
- The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, should recognize, acknowledge and stimulate knowledge sharing by developing viable moral incentives or symbolic rewards to encourage and acknowledge the work of knowledge promoters among their staff (paragraph 177).
- The executive heads of United Nations system organizations should sponsor the use of communities of practice in their respective organizations, as a means of stimulating interaction, knowledge sharing and solution searching within their respective organizations and system-wide. To do that, they should, in particular, task the communities of practice with debating, brainstorming and reporting on topics in their areas of expertise and take their conclusions into account, when appropriate, in decision-making (paragraph 190).
- The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should consider taking steps to disseminate the knowledge management toolkits produced by other United Nations system organizations for use, as appropriate, in their respective organizations (paragraph 197).
- The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations should encourage knowledge brokers in their respective organizations to migrate to the One UN Knowledge Exchange Network on Yammer, to utilize the platform and to report back on its strengths and weaknesses as well as on its potential to become a system-wide collaborative platform (paragraph 231).
- The experience acquired by the pioneering organizations in the area of metrics and the impact of using knowledge management indicators should be shared among communities of practice, and the conclusions should be reported on to the top managerial level (paragraph 241).

- The Secretary-General of the United Nations should identify, analyse, and promote those knowledge management initiatives and innovative actions taken outside the United Nations system by non-governmental organizations, private sector entities and academia, which can be coalesced at a system-wide level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (paragraph 260).

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I. The results of the survey on perception of knowledge management in the United Nations system
II. Technology platforms and other tools used for knowledge exchange in the United Nations system

ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

CEB	United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination
CKB	Climate Knowledge Brokers
DFS	Department of Field Support
DOCO	Development Operations Coordination Office
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECA	Economic Commission for Africa
ESCAP	Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific
ESCWA	Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
HLCM	High-level Committee on Management
HLCP	High-level Committee on Programmes
IAEA	International Atomic Energy Agency
ICAO	International Civil Aviation Organization
ICT	Information and communications technology
ICTN	Information and Communications Technology Network
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
ILO	International Labour Organization
ITC	International Trade Centre
ITCILO	International Training Centre of the International Labour Organization
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JIU	Joint Inspection Unit
KMA	Knowledge Management Austria
MOPAN	Multilateral Organization Performance Assessment Network
OCHA	United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD	Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development
OHCHR	Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights
OICT	Office of Information and Communications Technology
OIOS	Office of Internal Oversight Services
SKMF	Swiss Knowledge Management Forum
UNAIDS	Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
UNCCD	United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
UNCT	United Nations country team
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDG	United Nations Development Group
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UN-Habitat	United Nations Human Settlements Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIDO	United Nations Industrial Development Organization
UNITAR	United Nations Institute for Training and Research
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UNU	United Nations University
UNV	United Nations Volunteers programme
UN-Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

UNWTO	World Tourism Organization
WFP	World Food Programme
WHO	World Health Organization
WIPO	World Intellectual Property Organization
WMO	World Meteorological Organization

I. INTRODUCTION

1. As part of its programme of work for 2016, the Joint Inspection Unit (JIU) conducted a review of knowledge management in United Nations system organizations. The proposal for the review was made by the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO). The assessment of knowledge as a most valuable strategic resource requiring constant renewal had been made by JIU since 2004 in a note[1] that also identified the effective and productive management of knowledge as a critical factor for the success of an organization.

2. The first system-wide review of knowledge management in the United Nations system was conducted by JIU in 2007.[2] It recognized that the effective utilization of the knowledge capital, both in the organizations and system-wide, was critical for achieving the goals of the United Nations system organizations. That review concluded that the remaining challenge was for the organizations to systematically and efficiently develop, organize, share and integrate knowledge to achieve those cross-cutting goals.[3]

3. In 2009, UNIDO suggested that a system-wide review of knowledge management be undertaken in the context of the United Nations Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB). The Secretary-General, in his capacity as Chair of CEB, redirected the proposal to the High-level Committee on Programmes (HLCP) for discussion. However, the members of that Committee declined to discuss it, considering that the topic had already been covered — partly by the High-level Committee on Management (HLCM) with regard to harmonizing business practices and partly by the work of the Information and Communications Technology Network (ICTN).[4]

A. Objectives and scope

4. The objectives of the present review were:

(a) To assess the reasons why some of the recommendations in JIU/REP/2007/6 had not been implemented and consider alternative ways and solutions;
(b) To assess the readiness of the participating organizations to use knowledge management as a current and systematic practice in decision-making and other activities;
(c) To determine the state of play with regard to knowledge management policies and practices;
(d) To identify challenges and propose solutions for individual organizations and system-wide;
(e) To identify and disseminate best and good practices in relation to knowledge management;
(f) To explore new avenues for knowledge sharing within and among organizations and across the United Nations system.

5. The review was system-wide in scope and covered the United Nations Secretariat, funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA).

B. Methodology

6. In accordance with JIU internal standards, guidelines and working procedures, the methodology followed in preparing the present report included a preliminary review, a questionnaire, an inception paper, interviews and in-depth analysis. A detailed questionnaire was sent to all participating organizations and, on the basis of the responses received, the Inspector conducted interviews with officials of the participating organizations and

[1] JIU/NOTE/2004/1: Knowledge management at the International Labour Organization.
[2] JIU/REP/2007/6.
[3] Ibid., p. iv.
[4] CEB/2009/5, paras. 38-41.

sought the views of a number of other international organizations (in and outside of the United Nations common system), academic institutions and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). In total, the Inspector held 55 meetings and interviewed 175 persons. The review also included a system-wide self-administered survey on staff perception of knowledge management, to which 6,634 managers and staff members responded.

7. As part of the review, the Inspector and the review team participated in webinars and international conferences on knowledge management. The Inspector held a brainstorming session at the beginning of the review with 18 representatives of Geneva-based organizations and consulted with experts at several stages of the review. The review team also participated in three sessions of on the Swiss Knowledge Management Forum (SKMF), which includes representatives of United Nations system organizations.

8. In accordance with article 11.2 of the JIU statute, the present report was finalized after consultation among the Inspectors with a view to testing its conclusions and recommendations against the collective wisdom of the Unit. Comments on the draft report were sought from participating organizations and taken into account in finalizing the report.

9. To facilitate the handling of the report, the implementation of the recommendations and the monitoring thereof, attachment 2 contains a table indicating whether the report is submitted to the organizations concerned for action or for information. The table identifies the recommendations relevant for each organization, specifying whether they require a decision by the organization's legislative or governing body or whether they can be acted upon by the executive head of the organization.

10. The Inspector expresses his appreciation to everyone who assisted him in the preparation of the present report, particularly those who participated in the interviews and so willingly shared their knowledge and expertise.

II. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

11. One of the main findings of JIU/REP/2007/6 was that there was little understanding of what "knowledge" meant in the United Nations system, and the concept of "knowledge management" was perceived differently by different organizations. Another finding was that there was no common approach, either conceptual or practical, to adopting a conscious and systematic knowledge management policy within any given organization or in the United Nations system as a whole.

12. Almost a decade after that first report on the topic, the issues of understanding and perception remain key notions in the review of the knowledge management policies and practices in the United Nations system. Nevertheless, there have been significant developments across the system, triggered partly by JIU/REP/2007/6 and partly by the advancement of knowledge management practices and theories outside the system.

13. In the United Nations system, there have been years of experimentation, trials and errors, gradual and fragmented attempts to address knowledge management needs, bottom-up and top-down initiatives. Some of the actions taken have been fully successful, some have been inconclusive and others have been abandoned. It should be noted that this has also been the experience of the private sector with regard to knowledge management. Yet, lessons have been learned, perception has changed and the concept of knowledge management has come of age, including in the United Nations system, albeit in a fragmented way.

14. Corporate practice and academic research have progressed and resulted in balanced and action-oriented policies. There is now prevailing recognition that knowledge is a strategic asset in corporate governance and knowledge management is a valuable tool for supporting decision-making processes and enhancing efficiency and effectiveness in implementing policies. The concrete experience of various players has been accompanied by a robust evolution of knowledge management as a stand-alone academic discipline.

Box 1: State of knowledge management outside the United Nations system

According to the most recent survey on the state of knowledge management conducted among 483 executives and managers, 32 per cent had successfully implemented comprehensive, enterprise-scale knowledge management systems. Knowledge management as a separate organizational discipline is still new in 42 per cent of the organizations considered, knowledge management efforts have been in existence for three years or less. Among the challenges identified, 54 per cent of the respondents indicated that knowledge sharing was not integrated into the daily work and that information was kept in silos that did not allow for knowledge sharing. Half of the respondents said that there was still too little understanding of the strategic value of knowledge management. One-third have a dedicated departmental executive to oversee knowledge management activities, while 30 per cent rely on individual employees to take care of knowledge management.

Source: Joe McKendrick, *The State of Knowledge Management: 2015-16 KMWorld Survey* (www.kmworld.com).

15. As far as the United Nations is concerned, recent academic research and analyses went even further and proposed a knowledge perspective in evaluating the work of the system as a whole. One author called for a "holistic view" of how the system utilizes its global intelligence to educate, advocate and serve Member States' development. According to this vision, the United Nations system should not be seen as just an "international bureaucracy or as a peacekeeping, policymaking, humanitarian [...] entity", but as a "generator and purveyor" of knowledge and experience. In the same vein, knowledge is "the UN's greatest asset and the area in which it has the clearest competitive advantage".[5]

A. Knowledge management

16. JIU/REP/2007/6 adopted an ambitious and comprehensive approach to the topic aimed at stimulating coherent and harmonized practices and illustrated in particular by the recommendation made to CEB to develop a common definition of knowledge management to be used by all United Nations system organizations. The report also recommended that a minimum common set of guidelines be developed to be used as the basis for each organization in the development of its own knowledge management strategy.

17. The fact that such definition has not yet been adopted or even actively sought does not diminish the importance of the understanding of the meaning and usefulness of knowledge management and its concrete expressions. Indeed, the practices of some United Nations system organizations have proven that effective and efficient knowledge management policies are possible even in the absence of a common definition. The diversity and specificity of the mandates and objectives of the United Nations system organizations can be reflected in fit-for-purpose knowledge management strategies and policies, provided that they enable coherence, better use of resources, less duplication and waste, use of comparative advantages and enhanced synergies system-wide.

18. If at present there are no knowledge management strategies and policies in all organizations, the main reason is no longer the absence of a commonly accepted definition. What might be missing is the awareness of the importance of knowledge management and the willingness to make it part of policy-making and action.

19. For any organization wishing to introduce knowledge management, the array of useful concepts is very rich. Definitions vary from simple to sophisticated. JIU/REP/2007/6 defined knowledge management as "the

[5] Nanette Archer Svenson, *The United Nations as a Knowledge System* (London and New York, Routledge, 2016).

systematic processes, or range of practices, used by organizations to identify, capture, store, create, update, represent and distribute knowledge for use, awareness and learning across the organization" (para. 21).

20. That definition may be used as a starting point by individual organizations, as well as by the United Nations system as whole, in any process of internal reflection leading to the development of meaningful policies.

21. There are a variety of definitions of knowledge management that reflect the specific interests of individual organizations according to their particular priorities. For example, emphasis may be placed on the process and its systematic nature as follows: knowledge management is "the process of applying a systematic approach to capture, structuring, management and dissemination of knowledge throughout the organization to work faster, reuse best practices and reduce costly rework from project to project".[6] Given the specific nature of the operational activities of the United Nations, which are increasingly carried out on a project basis, such a definition may fit the priorities of some United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds.

22. Other attempts to clarify the concept focus on coordination and the synergies that can be created. In those cases, the following definition of knowledge management may be appropriate: "the deliberate and systematic coordination of an organization's people, technology, processes and organizational structure in order to add value through reuse and innovation [...] achieved through creating, sharing and applying knowledge as well as through feeding the valuable lessons learned and best practices into corporate memory in order to foster continued organizational learning".[7] Indeed, this definition would cover the coordination needs of the United Nations system as a whole, which is still deficient despite the efforts and concepts put to work in recent decades.

23. A suitable definition for the purpose of this particular review might be one in which emphasis is placed on business, whereby knowledge management would mean "treating the knowledge component of business activities as an explicit concern of business reflected in strategy, policy and practice at all levels of the organization, and making a direct connection between an organization's intellectual assets [...] and positive business result".[8] The knowledge management preparedness framework proposed in the present report as a basis for evaluation is inspired mainly by this definition.

24. From simple to complex, these definitions give an idea about the wide range of options available to decision makers when and if they are ready to embrace the concept of knowledge management and to make it a dynamic component of the managerial tools in their respective organizations.

25. The Inspector learned that the organizations that had already adopted and implemented knowledge management strategies at the corporate or departmental level used definitions that vary considerably from one organization to the other, but all still keep a full operational meaning. Despite the differences, the definitions all have a common denominator that is the essential component of knowledge management, as can be seen below.

26. For the International Labour Organization (ILO), one of the pioneering organizations to have embraced the concept of knowledge management, "a comprehensive knowledge management strategy has many dimensions and encompasses the full spectrum of generating, collecting, capturing, storing, codifying, transferring and communicating knowledge".[9]

[6] Kimiz Dalkir, *Knowledge Management in Theory and Practice* (Oxford, Elsevier, 2005), p. 3.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid., p. 4.
[9] ILO, "Results-based management" (Geneva, November 2007) (GB.300/PFA/9/2), para. 2.

27. For the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat), "Knowledge management comprises a range of strategies and practices used in an organization to identify, create, represent, distribute and enable the adoption of experiences, best practices, lessons, processes, technologies and information. This knowledge may be either embodied in individuals or embedded in organizational processes or practices".[10]

28. With regard to the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), "the mission for knowledge management [...] is to foster an environment that encourages the creation, sharing and effective application of knowledge through three essential components — people, process and technology."[11]

29. The Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) has a slightly different approach. It considers that knowledge management "refers to the management of knowledge flows — into, through and out of an organization. As such, knowledge management enhances overall organizational effectiveness by consolidating collective individual knowledge, including lessons learned from past experience, and applying it to new situations and environments, continually improving and refining what works and what doesn't in a given context".[12]

30. The World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) defines knowledge management as "a discipline that promotes an integrated approach for the identification, capture, retrieval, distribution, sharing, use and reuse of [...] information and knowledge assets".[13]

31. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) defines knowledge management as "the summary of all measures designed to address its knowledge-related challenges" and recognizes that knowledge is both "a key output that it delivers to its clients, as well as a key resource that the organization needs in order to deliver its results".[14]

32. For the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), "the establishment of a knowledge management system involves enhancing knowledge generated during project and programme implementation under a systematic, coherent and predefined approach".[15]

33. IAEA considers that "corporate knowledge management is an essential component of quality management and key to quality performance in the Agency". The corporate knowledge management policy "enables the Agency to create, acquire, capture, codify, store, retain, share, use and transfer knowledge".[16]

34. Despite the differences in expression, all the definitions point to the need for a systematic and comprehensive approach to knowledge management that is embraced and promoted by managers and staff and that encompasses in a coherent whole people, processes and technology.

35. However, in the Inspector's opinion, none of the definitions appropriately emphasize the need to better capture the knowledge embodied in the minds of individuals and their personal experience. The Inspector considers that knowledge management shifts the emphasis from the creation of vast repositories to the valorisation of tacit knowledge that may be lost when staff members leave an organization, either for personal reasons or due to retirement. The awareness and personal attitude of staff with regard to how knowledge is handled is crucial, irrespective of the existence of specifically designed knowledge management policies.

[10] UN-Habitat, *UN-Habitat Knowledge Strategy: Building knowledge-based organization* (May 2010), sect. 2.2.
[11] UNEP, *Knowledge Management Strategy 2014-2017 and Implementation Plan Outline* (2014), p. 4.
[12] ECA, *The ECA Knowledge Management Strategy: Managing the Knowledge of a Knowledge Organization* (2014), p. 15.
[13] WIPO, "The Knowledge Management Strategy of the World Intellectual Property Organization, 2015-2018", Information document (August 2015) (A/55/INF/5), p. 4.
[14] UNDP, *UNDP Knowledge Management Strategy Framework 2014-2017* (2014), p. 8.
[15] UNESCO, *Knowledge Management for Culture and Development* (2012).
[16] IAEA, Corporate Knowledge Management Policy (2013).

B. Knowledge

36. Although the large majority of United Nations system organizations define themselves explicitly or implicitly as knowledge-based organizations and despite the attempts made by JIU to define knowledge, some confusion about the notion still persists, and it is not just a matter of terminology. Confusion as to what constitutes knowledge may mislead staff and managers into believing that knowledge management does exist in their daily routine or business processes, just by another name.

37. It may therefore be worthwhile to reproduce the theoretical distinctions made by JIU in its previous report: "*Data* are discrete, objective facts about events, including numbers, letters, and images without context. *Information* is data with some level of meaning. It is usually presented to describe a situation or condition and, therefore has added value over data. *Knowledge* is built on data and information and created within the individual [or the organizational unit]. Knowledge, of course, has many levels and is usually related to a given domain of interest. In its strongest form, knowledge represents understanding of the context, insights into the relationships within a system, and the ability to identify leverage points and weaknesses and to understand future implications of actions taken to resolve problems".[17]

38. The present review will examine neither the knowledge content which varies considerably from one organization to another, nor the technology infrastructure used to produce, update, store and disseminate knowledge. The report will not deal with the issue of data or information as such (see figure 1), but with knowledge construed as a corpus of coherent and synergic information, experience, know-how, concepts and modi operandi, as conceptualized in the specific context of the JIU participating organizations, and developed in accordance with their institutional structures and objectives.

Figure 1 - Data, information, knowledge: conceptual differences

Knowledge
Know-how, understanding, experience, insight, intuition and contextualized information
Information
Contextualized, categorized, calculated and condensed data
Data
Facts and figures which relay something specific, but which are not organized in any way

[17] C.V. Holsapple (editor), *Handbook on Knowledge Management, Knowledge Matters* (Springer 2003), cited in JIU/REP/2007/6, para. 17.

39. The distinction between data, information and knowledge as defined in academic research is better understood by those organizations of the United Nations system that have conducted their own research and adopted knowledge management strategies.

40. As the intention of the current review is not to propose a one-size-fits-all model, neither in terms of policies and activities, nor definitions and concepts, the description of knowledge, information and data, as illustrated in figure 1 above, may be helpful to distinguish among these three basic concepts that still cause confusion.

41. It is up to each organization claiming to be or referred to as "knowledge-based" to define the knowledge that it produces in its specific context. The existing approaches in the United Nations system organizations are rich enough to provide some illustrations of individualized definitions or, for that matter, mere descriptions, perceptions or forms of knowledge.

42. For the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) the focus of knowledge management is "the organization's internal knowledge generated by staff members and consultants through various production processes, covering both substantive and programme support functions".[18]

43. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) perceive knowledge "as the collection and analysis of practices, experiences and expertise of all staff — civilian and uniformed — to identify best practices and lessons learned for future activities, decision-making of senior management, standard setting and policy development".[19]

44. For ECA, knowledge is defined as "what someone 'knows', acquired through study, observation, sharing and one's own experience"[20], while for the Economic Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) knowledge is "a combination of data and information, to which is added expert opinion, skills and experience, resulting in a valuable asset that aids decision-making", which is "intrinsically linked to people"[21].

45. The International Trade Centre (ITC) perceives knowledge as "facts, information and skills acquired through experience or training, including the theoretical and/or practical understanding of a subject".[22]

46. The definition of knowledge adopted by the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) is "the condition of having the understanding and the know-how gained from learning and/or experience that enables one to evaluate new inputs – information or challenge, thereby helping him/her make better decisions, succeed in his/her responsibility, and, ultimately, contribute to the achievement of the organizational objectives".[23]

47. WIPO has opted for a short, but meaningful, definition of knowledge as "facts and information acquired through experience".[24]

III. CHALLENGES

A. System-wide challenges

48. By way of questionnaires, the JIU participating organizations identified a large array of challenges in knowledge management design and implementation. They can be clustered as follows:

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[18] ESCWA, *ESCWA Knowledge Management Strategy: Towards Vision 2030* (2015), p. 4.

[19] United Nations, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Department of Field Support, Ref. 2015.13, Policy: *Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning*.

[20] ECA, *The ECA Knowledge Management Strategy: Managing the Knowledge of a Knowledge Organization* (2014).

[21] ESCAP stated having adopted the definition of knowledge used by the Asian Development Bank.

[22] According to the response of ITC to the JIU questionnaire.

[23] UNFPA, *Knowledge Management Strategy* (July 2009).

[24] WIPO, "The Knowledge Management Strategy of the World Intellectual Property Organization, 2015-2018", Information document (August 2015) (A/55/INF/5), p. 4.

(a) Lack of a common terminology, strategic vision and guidance within the United Nations Secretariat and system-wide;
(b) Lack of support and sponsorship at senior management level;
(c) Insufficient staff awareness and organizational culture, including absence of recognition, incentives and sanctions with respect to knowledge-sharing attitudes;
(d) Difficulties in measuring knowledge management impact and in adopting indicators;
(e) Loss of tacit knowledge owing to lack of continuity and adequate knowledge-retention policies;
(f) Persistence of the bad practice of working in silos;
(g) Incompatibilities artificially created by the technological infrastructure;
(h) Lack of financial resources.

49. The Inspector suggests various ways of addressing these challenges, not by designing ex-cathedra recommendations, but mainly by identifying solutions in the existing practices of some organizations that are more advanced than others — for objective or subjective reasons — in promoting knowledge management. Based on a system-wide perspective, the review sought to address and mitigate the implications of the main challenges stated above. The present report does not propose a maturity matrix, but rather contains enough elements that may be considered as a soft, system-wide strategic outline for knowledge management, which may be further translated into compatible, harmonized and inter-operable individual strategies.

50. Regarding the lack of financial resources, the Inspector recalls that one of the objectives of JIU reports is to recommend action that can lead to increased efficiency and effectiveness in the use of existing resources. Nevertheless, he did not ignore the possible need to invest in knowledge management and encourages such investment on a case-by-case basis, preceded by a rigorous cost-benefit analysis. He notes that such investment will not bear fruit overnight, but will prove beneficial in the long term.

51. The present report focuses mainly on improving knowledge management using existing human resources, as the Inspector subscribes to the virtuous circle concept whereby renewable knowledge can be used and reused in each organization and system-wide. Moreover, the modest purview of this report is a knowledge management exercise in itself aimed at facilitating access to initiatives and experience that already exist in the United Nations system.

B. Organizational challenges: a case study

52. The report cannot enlist all the challenges faced individually by the 28 participating organizations, although most of them are common and relevant system-wide. The Inspector found useful, nevertheless, to illustrate the most pertinent ones, by presenting a case study, namely challenges identified by UNDP in its knowledge management strategy. Although other United Nations system organizations have experience in knowledge management implementation as well, this choice was determined by the long-standing practice of UNDP of knowledge management, its multilayer organizational structure, the thematic diversity of its mandate and the candidness of its self-analysis. The Inspector took the liberty of extracting and summarizing a number of challenges that have been distilled and eloquently defined by UNDP:[25]

[25] UNDP, *UNDP Knowledge Management Strategy Framework 2014-2017* (2014), pp. 6-9.

Box 2: Knowledge management challenges identified by UNDP

(a) Knowledge-sharing expectations and processes are not systematically embedded in the programme and project cycle to capture lessons and with an aim of reuse;

(b) Knowledge sharing is not yet fully institutionalized as a natural cross-functional and cross-practice exercise;

(c) Even though communities of practices significantly contributed to open sharing across regional silos, flattening hierarchies and increasing knowledge flows among professional peers, the fact that they were directly aligned with thematic business units also nurtured the emergence of new thematic silos;

(d) Staff lack incentives and time to engage in knowledge sharing and learning beyond the bounds of their immediate deliverables;

(e) Metrics and indicators for successful knowledge management are underdeveloped, and the potential of evidence-based statistics, including social network analysis, for incentives, business intelligence and data-driven decision making are underutilized;

(f) Internal hierarchies and political sensitivities favour private knowledge sharing, with public sharing limited to highly processed knowledge products;

(g) Traditional corporate focus of knowledge sharing tends to be on ensuring that traditional donors and direct project clients are included in knowledge exchanges, while engagement with the wider academic and policy communities, emerging and non-traditional donors, civil society and the general public has not been systematized.

53. An important conclusion of the UNDP analysis was that the potential of knowledge management for the identification and management of talent and expertise was underutilized and existing mechanisms, such as rosters, lacked incentives for widespread accessibility and use. The organization did not analyse what knowledge it needed and what expertise should be developed internally or imported through recruitment.

54. Other United Nations system organizations, which may identify similar challenges in their own areas, could engage in closer consultation with UNDP, either bilaterally, in groups or system-wide, in order to find optimal solutions to their problems.

C. Preparedness framework

55. In order to address these challenges, the Inspector proposes a set of five criteria for assessing the current state of play in knowledge management and for making recommendations. The criteria will help to define the enabling environment and the institutional framework needed to enhance the organizations' preparedness for knowledge management:

(a) The existence of a strategy and/or policy documents and/or guidelines aimed at defining, institutionalizing and operationalizing knowledge management processes and tools;

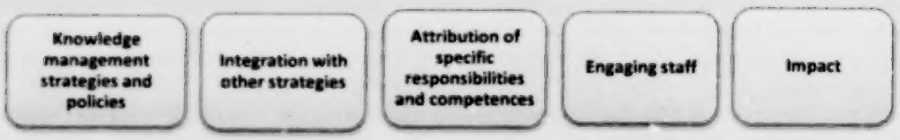
(b) The integration, alignment or programmatic connection of such documents with other strategies and plans of action of the organization;

(c) The explicit attribution of specific knowledge management-related responsibilities and competences to various units, managers and staff members;

(d) The existence of policies and training programmes aimed at enhancing the capability, readiness and proactive engagement of staff in knowledge management activities;

(e) The existence of direct or indirect positive impacts on the savings and efficiency of the organization's operations, including by knowledge sharing and improved transparency.

Figure 2 - Knowledge management preparedness framework



Source: JIU

56. The extent to which those elements of the knowledge management preparedness framework are already in place in the United Nations system organizations as well as the specific context or subjective reasons underlying lack of willingness and readiness to adopt knowledge management policies will be examined in chapters IV to VIII. The report does not promote a universal model or establish a maturity matrix for knowledge management, but rather considers alternative ways to promote knowledge management, as practised in other organizations.

57. Good practices identified during the review will be illustrated in relation to the preparedness framework. In addition, new initiatives and emerging good practices will be included in chapter IX on conclusions and ways forward.

D. Staff perception of knowledge management

58. As part of the review, a system-wide survey on staff perception of knowledge management was carried out by JIU and enjoyed the participation of 6,634 respondents.[26]

59. In addition to the main objective, which was to explore the perception of staff in relation to knowledge management in their respective organizations, the survey was also conceived as a way of disseminating basic knowledge management concepts, in particular for use by staff members who were not familiar with this relatively new academic and corporate discipline.

60. Although the results of the survey were more positive than the evidence-based findings of the present report, they confirmed the need for the actions recommended in the present report:

(a) The United Nations system organizations were considered knowledge-based organizations by 88.7 per cent of respondents, fully or partly, in almost equal proportion;

(b) A clear majority of respondents, that is 71.7 per cent, believed in the necessity of knowledge management strategies for better management of knowledge as a main asset of their organizations;

[26] The results of the survey can be found as annex I to the report on the JIU website (www.unjiu.org).

(c) The majority of respondents, 53.8 per cent, believed that the prevailing mentality in their organizations was not to reward individuals for the knowledge they shared, but rather for the knowledge they had;

(d) Only 25.3 per cent of respondents believed that knowledge management practice fully existed in their organizations;

(e) Only 11.3 per cent considered that policies and practices were in place for the retention of tacit knowledge when staff left the organization;

(f) One third of the respondents (33.4 per cent) were not aware of the existence of communities of practice in their organization or system-wide, while a slightly higher proportion (33.6 per cent) were actively engaged in such communities;

(g) An overwhelming majority of respondents (88.6 per cent) believed that the ability to share knowledge should be embedded in core competences or in the performance appraisal of all staff rather than of selected staff members or managers only;

(h) Regarding the most important factors for the promotion of knowledge management strategies and the institutionalization of knowledge management arrangements, during the interviews, the prevailing opinion was that the personal vision of the executive head was the main factor for enabling knowledge management. However, the survey ranked the executive head's personal vision as being only third in importance, as selected by 23.8 per cent of respondents. The interest of mid-level managers was chosen by 29.4 per cent of respondents and the existence of good practices in other organizations in the United Nations system was considered the main activation factor by 30.7 per cent of respondents.

61. The Inspector considers staff perception of knowledge management, as revealed by the survey — according to which the existence of good practices is the main factor conducive to the promotion of knowledge management — encouraging for the purpose of the current review. As stated above, his intention is to provide examples and appeal to United Nations system organizations to introduce and implement knowledge management strategies and policies based on existing practices in the United Nations system, rather than on theoretic constructs.

62. With all possible sociologic inaccuracies, the results of the survey indicated that the introduction and implementation of knowledge management strategies and practices have robust popular support in the United Nations system organizations. As the promotion of knowledge management requires a conscious and deliberate proactive approach, 6,634 respondents constitute a critical mass that can be considered as representative of an organizational culture that is favourable and responsive to the implementation of knowledge management.

IV. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES AND POLICIES

A. Why are knowledge management strategies useful?

63. A framework or strategy is essential to structuring and guiding the manner in which an organization channels its efforts to manage knowledge in order to achieve its goals. An organizational policy and a set of guidelines may further detail and transform such a strategy into concrete knowledge management processes and actions.

64. Knowledge management is not a technology-based concept. Technology supports knowledge management, but it is not the driving force for action. Knowledge management is based on people who produce knowledge in the context of the organization's objectives, while technology comes with the available tools as an enabler. Successful knowledge management begins with a sound vision combined with the fostering of an organizational culture that enables and rewards the creation and dissemination of valuable knowledge.

65. Such a comprehensive and coherent vision of the specific and general issues relating to knowledge management can be best achieved by means of strategies and guiding principles that aim to define operational procedures and objectives based on knowledge management practices. The expected outcome of a strategy is the establishment by the organization of a system to leverage its knowledge assets so as to maximize impact and reduce waste of resources, including time.

66. Once a knowledge management strategy is defined, institutional structure, attributions of responsibilities, human resources policies, benchmarking, as well as the enabling technology options, may be explored and put in place. The organization will have to develop a roadmap to identify the initiatives and tools that could best serve its long-term initiatives. A good strategy should at least reflect or result from an evaluation of the needs of the organization and provide the ways to meet the needs efficiently. On the governance side, a strategy should generate and confirm senior management commitment, increase awareness and understanding across the organization, and mobilize staff and resources for the implementation and scaling up of activities.[27]

67. The core of the strategy that should inspire concrete action and initiatives is the inventory of available knowledge resources in various forms, such as knowledge capital (tacit and explicit), know-how, expertise, experience, processes, producers, retention of knowledge in documents, social capital (culture, context, informal networks, awareness, trust and reciprocity) as well as the existing information and communications technology (ICT) platforms and the organizational structure.[28]

68. This review does not envisage a one-size-fits-all strategy outline. Moreover, the knowledge management strategies are not an end in themselves and do not exhaust all the related conceptual or practical aspects. Their contents may be customized in view of the specific priorities identified by each organization.

69. No matter what form it takes, a strategic vision is indispensable to creating operational coherence, raising awareness, stimulating synergies and elevating knowledge management as one of the conscious practices of an organization. Only a strategic vision and the systematic review of its implementation will help to infuse a knowledge management culture into the daily working routine of staff and into decision-making considerations. Such review should be based on periodic needs assessments and feedback from the process owners. IAEA offers a very good example with its Nuclear Knowledge Management Survey conducted in 2016. The survey was addressed to experts and practitioners with a view to collecting and disseminating information about where and how knowledge management practices and tools were utilized.

B. Developments system-wide since the 2007 JIU report on knowledge management

70. As mentioned earlier, the first system-wide review of knowledge management in the United Nations system was carried out by JIU in 2007. One of the recommendations of that review was addressed to the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations urging them to develop or revise the knowledge management strategy of their organizations, based on a survey of their clients' knowledge needs, an inventory of in-house knowledge, gaps identified between clients' needs and knowledge available within their organization and on guidelines to be developed by CEB.[29]

71. It is true that no common guidance has been produced so far and not all JIU participating organizations have adopted knowledge management strategies. Although they welcomed the 2007 JIU report, some organizations commented that the recommendations did not always convey the complexity of the challenges involved in developing a comprehensive knowledge management strategy.[30] In particular, the organizations noted that complying with this recommendation could take years and could entail substantial costs. As a result, no guidelines have been issued to date and the matter has never been discussed in either of the committees of CEB.

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[27] Steffen Soulejman Hanus, *Becoming a Knowledge-Sharing Organization: A Handbook for Scaling Up Solutions through Knowledge Capturing and Sharing* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2016).

[28] Kimiz Dalkir, *Knowledge Management in Theory and Practice* (Oxford, Elsevier, 2005).

[29] JIU/REP/2007/6, recommendation 2.

[30] A/63/140/Add.1.

72. In 2009, UNIDO advocated a more structured approach to knowledge sharing and knowledge management and suggested that a system-wide knowledge management review be undertaken. However, CEB/HLCP did not endorse the idea of establishing a new task force or working group to address the issue. The Committee argued that the matter had already been covered, partly by the efforts of CEB/HLCM in harmonizing business practices and partly by the work of ICTN.[31] Eventually, no CEB member jointly or individually has brought up this topic back to the CEB agenda since.

73. Nevertheless, the efforts were not without system-wide results. Based on initial strategies or analyses, some organizations developed sustainable knowledge management policies. Despite the differences among organizations, substantial individual and institutional knowledge management experience has been accumulated and recourse to costly consultancies to draft strategies has diminished considerably. State-of-the-art literature on basic knowledge management concepts is now available, not only in the academic sphere, but also in the form of authoritative handbooks for multilateral organizations.

74. Currently, across the United Nations system, there are enough knowledge management strategies that have stood the test of time and relevance. Those doc can inspire or help other organizations in developing their own strategies as their scope and content can be adapted to the specific mandates of different organizations. Lack of resources is no longer a decisive element; the intellectual resources necessary to develop relevant knowledge management strategies exist in all the organizations, embodied in staff and managers and embedded at headquarters and field levels.

C. Pioneering work in knowledge management in the United Nations system

75. IAEA has been a focal point for nuclear knowledge and information since its establishment in 1957. Nuclear knowledge management came to the forefront formally from 2002 onwards, when the first resolution referring to nuclear knowledge as a high priority for member States was adopted by the General Conference.[32]

76. From a historic perspective, it is worth noting the pioneering work carried out by ILO. In its Strategic Policy Framework, 2002-05, ILO acknowledged the key role of knowledge management, which is as valid today as it was then, and announced its intention to develop and implement a knowledge management policy.[33] ILO considered that investment in strategies on knowledge management and knowledge sharing was needed to, among others, "maintain its status as a leading knowledge institution in the world of work".[34] Another factor that prompted ILO (and other organizations as well) to develop knowledge management strategies was the need to bring the field and headquarters closer together.

77. In 2004, JIU reacted very promptly to the organization's special interest in the matter and issued a sui generis note[35] with the objective of contributing to the development of knowledge management activities within ILO and helping the organization to consolidate a future knowledge management strategy. The note contained 10 recommendations for action with regard to enablers of knowledge management and the knowledge management process.

78. In 2007, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) adopted one of the most comprehensive and sustainable approaches to knowledge management in its knowledge management strategy.[36] In the Inspector's view, the strategy contains all the theoretical and operational elements necessary

[31] CEB/2009/5, paras. 38-41.

[32] IAEA, Strengthening the Agency's activities related to nuclear science, technology and applications, resolution adopted on 20 September 2002 (GC(46)/RES/11), B: Nuclear knowledge.

[33] ILO, "Strategic policy framework, 2002-05 and preview of the Programme and Budget proposals for 2002-03" (Geneva, November 2000) (GB.279/PFA/6), paras. 108-113.

[34] ILO, "Results-based management" (Geneva, November 2007) (GB.300/PFA/9/2).

[35] JIU/NOTE/2004/1.

[36] IFAD, *Knowledge Management Strategy* (Rome, September 2007).

for knowledge management in an intergovernmental organization. It defines basic concepts and clarifies terminology, based on a needs assessment and an inventory of knowledge assets. It provides links to the organization's overall objectives and programmes, defines roles and responsibilities, and indicates areas of articulation between knowledge management and other key institutional processes.

79. The World Health Organization (WHO) was among the earliest promoters of knowledge management by adopting a Knowledge Management Strategy in 2005.[37] The strategy dealt with external aspects, while the following one, adopted in 2010, smoothly changed its focus on an internal dimension. At expiration, the 2010 strategy has not been revised and it was discontinued by effect of some changes to the organizational chart.

80. Knowledge management initiatives have been ongoing at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) for 20 years, that is, since 1996. In 2005, the Director-General introduced the concept of FAO as a knowledge organization and a push for tacit knowledge management was made in 2008, with initiatives culminated in the publication of the FAO Knowledge Strategy in 2011. The Inspector learned that the strategy was not revised or extended as knowledge management was no longer seen as essential in the context of the change in focus of its operational approach towards rapid reaction.

81. The knowledge management strategy adopted by UNFPA in 2009[38] was later absorbed into the Strategic Plan 2014-2017 under the new business model.

D. Stand-alone knowledge management strategies in force

82. To date, of the United Nations system organizations reviewed, UNDP, IAEA, UNESCO, UNEP, UN-Habitat, WIPO and IFAD have a stand-alone organizational knowledge management strategy. ILO is in a process of transitioning from a knowledge management strategy that expired in 2015 to a new strategy that is currently under consideration. The new strategy will include new directions and will build on previous achievements in knowledge management, especially the previous results-based strategy on knowledge sharing. At the time of the review, the World Food Programme (WFP) was in the process of developing and adopting a knowledge management strategy.

83. Some parts of the United Nations Secretariat also have knowledge management strategies in place, notably ECA, ESCWA, DPKO and DFS.

84. One of the most complex and convincing experiences in knowledge management has been that of UNDP. The advent of knowledge management in UNDP was primarily fuelled by the need to provide coherence to a wide portfolio of knowledge dispersed not only thematically, but also geographically, in all its country offices. As far back as 1999, it was stated that "UNDP doesn't know what UNDP does",[39] prompting the organization to be among the pioneers of knowledge management in the United Nations system.

85. It was expected that the knowledge management strategy would enable UNDP "to dramatically improve the impact of its work at the country level by accessing its global knowledge, to foster human development, to develop capacity, to contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals and, finally, to closely cooperate with other United Nations agencies to serve clients and partners with result-oriented and proven development solutions".[40] The current knowledge management strategy framework covers the period 2014-2017.

86. IAEA adopted a comprehensive knowledge management system in 2013 that goes beyond a simple strategic document but operates at different institutional levels, specifically and duly adapted to nuclear

[37] WHO, *Knowledge Management Strategy* (Geneva, 2005) (WHO/EIP/KMS/2005.1).
[38] UNFPA, Knowledge Management Strategy (July 2009).
[39] UNDP Administrator Transition Team knowledge management findings (1999), cited in UNDP, *Knowledge Strategy: Enabling UNDP to share and leverage its knowledge and experience, 2009-2011* (2009).
[40] Ibid., p. 3.

knowledge management. The IAEA Corporate Knowledge Management Policy constitutes the basis of and complements the knowledge management system. The policy is implemented through a plan and a set of guidelines, and states that "the Agency regards knowledge management as an essential component in the framework of good corporate governance, quality management and quality performance in the Agency, taking into account a one-house approach".

87. UNESCO currently works on the basis of a knowledge management and ICT strategy. The underlying vision is to "enable programme planning, delivery and evaluation in the most efficient and effective way, through the full and innovative use of information and communication technologies and the implementation of knowledge management based on a knowledge-sharing culture".[41] One of its six strategic directions is to "embed knowledge management in programme execution".

88. The UNEP Knowledge Management Strategy 2014-2017 takes into consideration the JIU management review of environmental governance within the United Nations system (JIU/REP/2008/3) and the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) audit report on internal governance in UNEP of 23 September 2010 (AA2009/220/01), which recommended that UNEP develop a policy on knowledge management.

89. In 2010, UN-Habitat developed a knowledge management strategy[42] aimed at transforming the organization into a learning and knowledge-based organization. Since then, the organization reports that it has made "measurable improvements" in various organizational and management areas related to knowledge. It admits, however, that mainstreaming and institutionalizing this knowledge is far from being achieved and numerous areas are still to be developed and/or refined. Based on the 2010 knowledge strategy and the related knowledge audit, internal and external evaluations, lessons learned, feedback and strategic management decisions, the 2015 knowledge management strategy[43] proposes to prioritize and invest in six broad knowledge management areas.

90. The development of a knowledge management strategy in WIPO was prompted by the JIU review of its management and administration (JIU/REP/2014/2), in which the Inspectors recommended that a comprehensive knowledge management strategy be presented to the General Assembly by the end of 2015. In response to that report, an independent evaluation[44] was performed to assess the maturity of knowledge sharing in WIPO. The evaluation focused on the activities, processes and culture in WIPO relating mainly to knowledge sharing.

91. At the time of the review, WFP was preparing its corporate knowledge management strategy, which was expected to be approved and completed in early 2017. The drafting of the strategy was assigned to the Innovation and Change Management Division, which organized regional consultations to gather feedback, particularly from country offices. The approach used to draft the strategy was to suggest a way by which knowledge management can be maintained rather than create an overambitious strategy that would not be sustainable in practice.

92. It should be noted that WFP is not the only organization in which initiatives on knowledge management were first conceived at the regional level. Two regional commissions have also developed bold and comprehensive knowledge management strategies: ECA introduced a strategy in 2014, followed by ESCWA in 2015.

93. The strategy adopted by ECA in 2014 is markedly different from its earlier efforts, which "saw knowledge management as a separate, technology oriented efforts primarily used for knowledge sharing". ECA considers

[41] UNESCO, *KM & ICT Strategy: UNESCO's Strategy on Knowledge Management and Information & Communication Technology 2012-2017*, Version 2.0 (December 2013), p. 5.
[42] UN-Habitat, *UN-Habitat Knowledge Strategy* (May 2010).
[43] UN-Habitat, *UN-Habitat Knowledge Management Strategy* (2015).
[44] WIPO, Internal Audit and Oversight Division, "Knowledge sharing in WIPO", Evaluation report (EVAL 2014 02).

that this strategy "takes a more fundamental approach" because it concentrates on the ways in which knowledge supports the Commission's core business. The strategy is based on five guiding principles with particular focus on "knowledge on demand".[45]

94. The knowledge management strategy adopted by ESCWA expressly states that it aims to support the critical initiatives of the organization, such as developing the regional framework for the Sustainable Development Goals, taking into account a long-term need for enhanced and expanded knowledge-based services and a cross-divisional approach. In particular, in a system-wide perspective, the strategy highlights the commitment of ESCWA to take into account future knowledge management initiatives involving other regional commissions and United Nations agencies in an effort to contribute to the One United Nations initiative and collaboration across departments and duty stations.[46]

95. Built on the successes and lessons learned from the implementation of its 2007-2010 strategy, in 2013, IFAD adopted a knowledge management framework that takes the organization's strategic vision further.[47] The new strategy is built on a pragmatic and action-oriented approach and a "more coherent and strategic knowledge management" based on overall objectives and key results areas, principles for implementation and priority knowledge opportunities.

E. Other knowledge management-related policies

96. The UNFPA Strategic Plan 2014-2017 includes lessons learned from the 2009 knowledge management strategy in relation to capacity development, advocacy and policy dialogue/advice under a new business model.

97. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) does not have a globally applicable knowledge management strategy, however, some technical/functional areas and regional offices have developed their own knowledge management strategies and plans. For example, the Outreach Division in Geneva has its own strategy in place and the Office of Emergency Programmes has developed a knowledge management approach targeted to humanitarian needs. Some research knowledge management functions and responsibilities are contained in a new policy on research.

98. Similarly, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) does not have a strategy, but knowledge management is considered a key factor in the implementation of its quality management policy. The policy refers mainly to a knowledge system that is associated with the intranet-based Practice and Quality Management System, where knowledge is captured, maintained and qualified according to knowledge maps.

99. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) prepared a draft strategy in 2008, following a recommendation from OIOS, which concluded that the lack of an operational UNODC-wide knowledge management strategy had limited the leveraging of research and analysis work for potential impact. OIOS recommended that UNODC operationalize an integrated knowledge management strategy. The draft strategy was reworked in 2013 for consideration by the Executive Committee; however, lack of resources has prevented the adoption of a new document.

100. In the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), elements pertaining to knowledge management, such as knowledge transfer and loss of knowledge due to changes in staffing, are dealt with in an information management, usage and security policy.

[45] ECA, *The ECA Knowledge Management Strategy* (2014).
[46] ESCWA, *ESCWA Knowledge Management Strategy: Towards Vision 2030* (2015).
[47] IFAD, *IFAD Knowledge Management Framework 2014-2018*.

101. The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) Information Technology and Information Management (IT/IM) Strategy — approved in 2009 and revised in response to the recommendation made by JIU following its review of ITU management and administration in 2015 (JIU/REP/2016/1, recommendation 11) — is considered an expression of knowledge management. The Inspector notes that the strategy does not elaborate on the nature of the "information" and that the concept is usually paired with "technology". In updating its current IT/IM strategy, ITU will consider adopting a coordinated approach in relation to all aspects of information and knowledge management. The updated strategy is to be presented to the ITU Council in May 2017.

Box 3: Knowledge management strategic objectives as an alternative to knowledge management strategies: the case in World Meteorological Organization (WMO)

Optimize knowledge management

Knowledge management serves to improve activities across the Capacity Development Strategy and is particularly important to support definition of requirements, needs, gaps and priorities. Knowledge management will provide for continuous renewal of information, best practices, and shared skill across WMO. This Objective will involve the creation of supportive organizational structures, putting in place Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) with emphasis on teamwork and diffusion of knowledge that can assist in capacity development. Strategic Objective 3 will optimize knowledge management as well as foster the sharing of experiences and shared resources… The use of ICT will enable effective collaborative approaches, real-time information sharing, monitoring and feedback. Encouraging communities of practice will complement the ICT recognizing the importance of human interaction for knowledge management. The sharing of needed skills and information will include the use of volunteers and third party contributions.

Source: WMO, Capacity Development Strategy (2015), Strategic Objective 3.

102. The Inspector acknowledges that small organizations have more limited needs and resources to develop comprehensive knowledge management strategies and policies. Nevertheless, there are ways and means for such organizations to practice knowledge management. As shown in Box 3 above, World Meteorological Organization (WMO) has included in its capacity development strategy[48], six strategic objectives, one of which is aimed at optimizing knowledge management in the organization.

103. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance efficiency.

Recommendation 1

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, should develop knowledge management strategies and policies aligned with the mandate, goals and objectives of their respective organizations, by the end of 2018. Such strategies should be based on an assessment of current and future knowledge management needs and include measures for implementation.

[48] WMO, *WMO Capacity Development Strategy and Implementation Plan* (2015) (WMO-No. 1133).

Figure 3 - Knowledge management strategies adopted since 2007

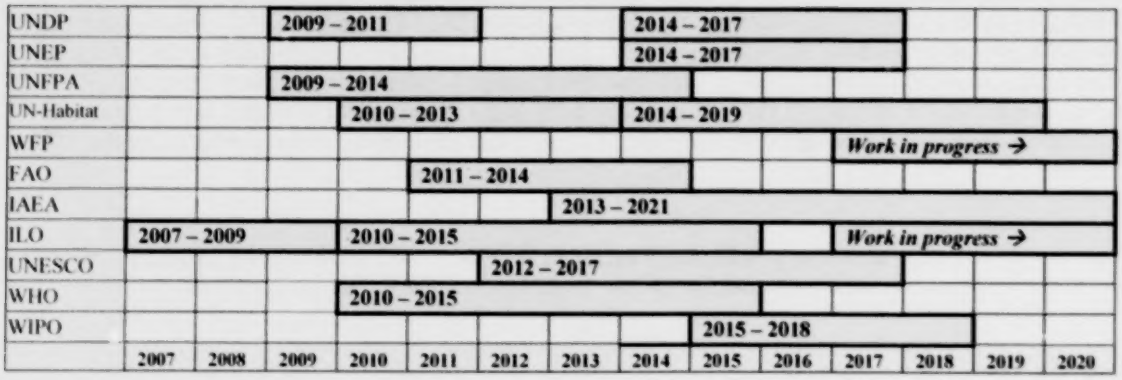
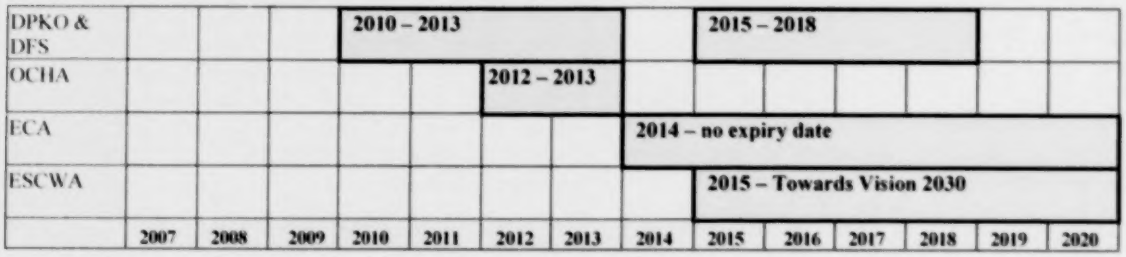


Figure 4 - Knowledge management strategies in the United Nations Secretariat



F. Knowledge management in the United Nations Secretariat

104. The United Nations Secretariat presents no vision but only fragmented and isolated concerns for knowledge management, despite early recommendations by OIOS. The OIOS thematic evaluation report[49] mandated by the Committee for Programme and Coordination (CPC) found that only four of the 26 departments of the United Nations Secretariat had an explicit policy or strategy for organizing and sharing knowledge. In its report, OIOS emphasized the critical role that cross-organizational collaboration and peer interaction plays in knowledge management and knowledge sharing. The report also underlined the importance of connecting staff with each other's ideas, insights and experiences, the role of knowledge management strategies, and the insufficient use of technological infrastructure for knowledge sharing.

105. Based on that report, CPC recommended the development of a Secretariat-wide strategy. In 2009, the mandated triennial review conducted by OIOS concluded that the CPC recommendation was followed-up because the Secretariat had introduced in 2008 a new information and communications technology strategy[50] identifying "knowledge management and collaboration as one of its key institutional drivers". The Secretariat also had defined "knowledge management as encompassing three essential processes that are intricately linked: organizational learning, information management and information technology"[51]. Yet, the Inspector found no visible signs of implementation of the specific recommendations of OIOS on knowledge management across the United Nations Secretariat as a whole.

[49] E/AC.51/2006/2.
[50] A/62/793 and Corr.1 and A/62/793/Add.1.
[51] E/AC.51/2009/4.

106. The revision of the ICT strategy in 2014[52] focused more on ICT infrastructure and does not have any traces of the knowledge management aspects that existed in the previous one. This was another lost opportunity to create a common approach on knowledge management in the United Nations Secretariat. To date, very few departments have considered the issue in a systematic and harmonized manner, despite the recommendations made by JIU and OIOS. This state of play, among others, confirms what was stated at the beginning of the review, namely that the implementation of ICT does not mean knowledge management. To be efficient, knowledge management should be considered at the strategic level and not as an automatic spin-off benefit of investments in ICT.

107. Furthermore, while the technological infrastructure is expected to enable efficient and harmonized knowledge management, the findings of the 2012 report of the Board of Auditors on the handling of ICT in the Secretariat indicated that even the ICT systems as such "have continued to operate in a highly fragmented way and that the Organization has lacked a common vision for it."[53] The Office of Information and Communications Technology (OICT) of the Secretariat reports that knowledge management is addressed through the Enterprise Delivery Framework and tools applied by the Enterprise Application Centres.

108. Another discontinued effort was the Working Group on Knowledge Management, established in June 2008 and tasked with developing a Secretariat-wide knowledge management strategy by end of the second quarter of 2009. The Working Group, whose membership included 13 Secretariat entities, was transferred to the Secretariat's Knowledge Management Strategy Development Team in 2013.

109. Notable positive cases in the United Nations Secretariat are the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS), which adopted a joint stand-alone knowledge management policy. The revised DPKO and DFS policy entitled "Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning" entered into force on 1 October 2015 with a three-year horizon. The policy is a useful guide on how to capture knowledge more systematically. It was developed in response to the recommendations in the 2000 Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations[54] as well as the successive recommendations made by JIU and OIOS in 2007 and 2009, respectively. The policy was also prompted by Security Council resolution 2167 (2014), in which the Council encouraged information-sharing and the sharing and exchange of knowledge.

Box 4: The United Nations Security Council on information and knowledge sharing

The Security Council,

Encourages the Secretary-General and regional and subregional organizations and arrangements to enhance information-sharing on their respective capabilities and lessons learned in maintaining international peace and security and to continue to compile best practices...

Recognizes the inclusive consultative processes undertaken ... and encourages closer coordination and cooperation on policing issues between the United Nations Secretariat and international, regional and subregional organizations, including through ... the sharing and exchange of knowledge...

Source: Security Council Resolution 2167 (2014), operative paragraphs 16 and 17.

[52] A/69/517.
[53] A/67/651.
[54] Widely known as the "Brahimi Report".

110. The Department of Political Affairs (DPA) issued on 2 June 2014 a knowledge management concept note, in which knowledge management was described as "not a strategy with a starting point and end-state, but rather a constant process of improvement". The note, which also set out the principles related to successfully implementing knowledge management in DPA, clearly defines the overarching objective on knowledge management as "helping people to systematically create, share, retain and use knowledge, and getting the right information to the right people at the right time, to improve performance and meet the United Nations Secretariat's goals."

111. Furthermore, the department's Strategic Plan 2016-2019 includes the strategic objective of "reviewing and updating knowledge management, policy guidance and decision-making". The Inspector considers that the concept developed by DPA offers a useful option for less ambitious departmental approaches as it proposes an approach for ongoing, incremental and sustainable improvement in a realistic way, based on a cost/benefit analysis and real outcomes.

112. The United Nations Office for Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Strategic Plan 2014-2017 refers to the sharing, exchange and transfer of knowledge in many of its strategic objectives. Moreover, knowledge management was one of the four pillars of the OCHA Organizational Learning Strategy 2012-2013.

113. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to strengthen coherence and harmonization.

Recommendation 2

The Secretary-General, in consultation with the Senior Management Group, should develop at least a minimum set of knowledge management guidelines for the United Nations Secretariat, based on best practices and experiences in departments, as well as in the United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies and the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), by the end of 2018.

V. INTEGRATION OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT IN OVERALL ORGANIZATIONAL STRATEGIES

114. Knowledge management is not an end in itself; rather knowledge management is meant to serve the strategic objectives of the organizations by making sure that knowledge — as a valuable resource — is not wasted. Indeed, organizational strategies outline the vision, set the objectives, define the pillars related to results delivery in the particular organization and design the path to achieving the organization's goals and improving its performance. Integrating and linking knowledge management strategies or policies in the overall organizational strategies indicates awareness of the contribution of knowledge to enhancing the relevance and efficiency of the work of the organization.

115. All entities that have developed stand-alone knowledge management strategic documents (UNDP, IAEA, UNESCO, UNEP, UN-Habitat, WIPO, ILO, IFAD, ECA, ESCWA, DPKO and DFS) also integrated knowledge management in their overall organizational strategies and plans.

Examples:

UNDP	Knowledge Management Strategic Framework 2014-2017	UNDP Strategic Plan 2014-2017
UN-Habitat	Knowledge Management Strategy 2014-2019	Medium Term Strategic and Institutional Plan for 2008-2013
IAEA	Corporate Knowledge Management 2013-2021	Medium Term Strategy 2012-2017
ILO	Knowledge Management Strategy (work in progress; transitioning from strategy 2010-2015)	Declaration on Social Justice for a Fair Globalization
UNESCO	Strategy on Knowledge Management and ICT 2012-2017	Medium-Term Strategy for 2014-2021
WIPO	Knowledge Management Strategy 2015-2018	Medium Term Strategic Plan 2010-2015
ECA	Knowledge Management Strategy (2014)	ECA Business Plan 2013-2015
ESCWA	Knowledge Management Strategy: Towards Vision 2030 (2015)	Strategic Framework for the Biennium 2014-2015

116. The organizations that do not have stand-alone knowledge management strategies but have included knowledge management elements in other strategic documents and policies have been referred to in the previous chapter (UNFPA, UNICEF, UNOPS, UNODC, UNAIDS, ITU, WMO as well as the OCHA and DPA).

117. In the United Nations Secretariat, DPKO and DFS propose a comprehensive and dynamic way of using knowledge management in their policy on "Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning" in order to "offer integrated support to all peacekeeping operations, in the field and Headquarters".[55]

118. The Inspector considers this policy — although it is a departmental policy — as a good practice because DPKO and DFS translate the theoretical concepts of knowledge management into practice, in particular with respect to knowledge-sharing tools, collaborative frameworks and knowledge retention. The rationale behind the knowledge management policy in peacekeeping operations (see box below), in its essence, can apply to any other field operation run by United Nations system organizations, provided it is adapted to their specificities.

[55] DPKO and DFS, *Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning*, Policy (2015).

Box 5: Rationale for knowledge management in peacekeeping operations

"Peacekeepers are problem-solvers and innovators. They find themselves in complex and fluid environments that require them to adapt, create, and learn on a daily basis to achieve their mission mandate. Recording innovation successes and failures; sharing them with peers in other missions and at Headquarters, and learning from them through the development and revision of guidance and training is fundamental to further improving the effectiveness and efficiency of United Nations peacekeeping.

Source: DPKO and DFS, Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning, Policy (2015).

Note: The words "peacekeepers" and "peacekeeping" can be replaced by any other category of United Nations staff and activities.

VI. ATTRIBUTION OF RESPONSIBILITIES

A. Human resources assigned to knowledge management

119. Although a knowledge management strategic vision is a pre-requisite for the implementation of coherent knowledge management policies, it is not sufficient. Specific roles and responsibilities must be attributed to staff to translate the knowledge management strategies into initiatives and activities. Depending on the importance attributed to knowledge management in each organization, those roles and responsibilities can be held by staff at different levels — from senior and middle management to lower level — in such a way as to ensure leadership and coherence. Not surprisingly, the review found a wide range of practices in the United Nations system organizations that have knowledge management strategies or policies.

120. For example, ECA, IAEA, ILO, UNDP, UNESCO, UNFPA and UNICEF have well-defined responsibilities for staff assigned totally or partially to knowledge management in a structured way, while ITU and UNAIDS have defined responsibilities specifically to the delivery of knowledge products to Member States. In UNEP and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), some staff are assigned to knowledge management in addition to other responsibilities. In ESCWA, an implementation team can occasionally carry out tasks stemming from the organization's knowledge management strategy. In the United Nations Secretariat, DPKO and DFS have deployed a team at Headquarters to coordinate knowledge management responsibilities in the field. \

121. UNDP officials interviewed during the review emphasized the importance of having a structured and focused team, whose members "sleep and eat" knowledge management. The dedicated Global Knowledge Management team that deals with both knowledge management and innovation is led by a Global Knowledge and Innovation Advisor.

122. The United Nations Volunteers (UNV) programme, which is administered by UNDP and which deploys annually about 7,000 national and international volunteers to operations of 28 United Nations system organizations and other international entities, has a Knowledge and Innovation Section.

123. Based on a longstanding experience and vision, as well as support by top management, a good practice has been put in place in ILO. The ILO Knowledge Management Coordination Team has been established in

March 2014 to assist staff and managers in the effort to provide consistent, high quality analysis and policy advice based on organizational knowledge. The three-person team reports directly to the Office of the Deputy Director-General for Policies and is in charge of advising ILO globally on knowledge management. To this end, the team has a full network of knowledge custodians who can be contacted in case of need of knowledge sharing. The team takes the lead in the development of the organization's overall knowledge management strategy and coordinates and supports work across all the policy departments, administrative units and field offices. The team is responsible for the realization of specific knowledge management projects across the organization and, to that effect, all staff are required to support it.

124. The IAEA Corporate Knowledge Management Guidelines[56] provide operational guidance for the implementation of the Agency's corporate knowledge management policy and plan. Section B of the Guidelines identifies the key roles and responsibilities at different levels of the Agency's organizational structure. Notably, in IAEA, the coordination of knowledge management aspects is assigned to a senior official at the level, a Special Assistant to the Director-General for Strategy.

125. IAEA also established the Interdepartmental Steering Group on Corporate Knowledge Management (ISG/CKM) in 2011. Among other tasks, the Steering Group refines and furthers the progress of the corporate knowledge management plan, coordinates its implementation, monitors the knowledge management-related actions carried out by various departments and reports annually to the Director-General.

126. UNFPA has a dedicated team of two knowledge management specialists in the Strategic Information and Knowledge Management Branch, one of the four branches of the Programme Division. In addition, some regional and country offices have created posts with specific knowledge management responsibilities.

127. In UNESCO, knowledge management is part of the responsibilities of the Knowledge Management and Information Systems Division. Specific posts across the organization are also identified as knowledge management positions. The Director of the Division, who is also the organization's Chief Information Officer, reports directly to the Deputy Director-General of UNESCO.

128. In UNICEF, the Office of Research and the Learning and Knowledge Exchange Unit are both part of the Division of Data Research and Policy. The Learning and Knowledge Exchange Unit has three staff members dedicated full time to knowledge exchange, including capture, sharing and reuse of tacit knowledge. The Office of Research has three full-time staff members dedicated to research-related knowledge management and research facilitation. In addition, there are knowledge management focal points dispersed throughout the organization in the respective divisions at headquarters and in the regional offices.

129. In ITU, the Project Support and Knowledge Management Department is responsible for assisting ITU member States and ITU-Telecommunication Development Sector members in strengthening institutional and organizational capability to adapt to the rapidly changing telecommunication and ICT environment through capacity-building.

130. During its restructuring exercise in 2012, ECA established the Knowledge Services Section responsible for implementing the knowledge management strategy, with a focus on two key activities: collection and connection. The Section was created by the merging of three pre-existing units: the Library, the Information Technology Centre for Africa and the Knowledge Management Unit.

131. The secretariats of two of the conventions opened for signature at the Earth Summit held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992 have assigned knowledge management responsibilities to specific departments. The Secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) shifted its focus from library and records management to knowledge management. Since then, the Knowledge Management Unit has grown

[56] IAEA, INF/NOT/209.

from four to six core staff members, and is under Administrative Services. It is still limited to explicit knowledge in digital form.

132. The Secretariat of the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) had a separate Knowledge Management Unit which dealt more with external knowledge management. However, the Secretariat shifted its focus to scientific knowledge and best practices and in 2015, the Knowledge Management Unit was absorbed into the Science, Technology and Implementation Unit, with knowledge management responsibilities redistributed to staff.

133. In DPKO and DFS, a Knowledge Management and Guidance team in the Policy and Best Practices Service has seven posts allocated to knowledge management and policy coordination. The team is assisted by Policy and Best Practices Officers deployed in most peacekeeping missions. In addition, the team manages a network of civilian and uniformed officers with knowledge management responsibilities.

134. In DPA, the Guidance and Learning Unit of the Policy and Mediation Division is the main focal point on knowledge management and provides support and guidance in the conduct of learning and evaluations exercises, and acts as the repository of knowledge products. DPA created a dedicated knowledge management position, funded by extra-budgetary resources in 2012. DPA also appointed Best Practices Officers in several of its political missions.

135. For comparison with the knowledge management situation outside of the United Nations system, the review considered the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), an organization with 28 member States. OECD has a Knowledge Management Unit that is part of the Digital, Knowledge and Information Services of the Executive Directorate, which supports the strategic objectives of the organization. About five of the 20 staff members of the Unit deal full time with knowledge management, while six or eight staff members devote 50 per cent of their time to knowledge management.

136. **The Inspector recommends that the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, assign responsibilities relating to the implementation of knowledge management and the monitoring of the knowledge resources at the corporate level. The organizational form that the assignment of such responsibilities takes (for example, separate units, interdepartmental teams, individual officials or other) should correspond to the specific needs of each organization and be adapted to the available resources.**

B. Knowledge management as an organizational staff competence

137. Knowledge management strategies are construed and endorsed by individuals in diverse organizations through individual competencies. Knowledge management and organizational competencies complement each other to create synergies. In order to manage the intellectual assets of any organization, there is need to manage the organizational competencies.[57]

138. The first JIU report on knowledge management (JIU/REP/2007/6) recommended that the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations establish knowledge-sharing competencies as one of the criteria to be assessed in the staff performance appraisal system (recommendation 5). In its comments on that report, CEB reported that the organizations had welcomed the recommendation as a critical component for the success of any knowledge management strategy and that they had taken note of the need for a closer connection between knowledge-sharing activities and staff performance, as well as for closer integration of knowledge sharing/knowledge management into their results-based management frameworks.[58]

[57] Meenu Dave, Mikku Dave, Y. S. Shishodia, "Knowledge management and organizational competencies: A harmonic collaboration", *International Journal of Advanced Research in Computer Science and Software Engineering* , vol. 2, No. 12 (December 2012), p. 45.

[58] A/63/140/Add.1, paras. 9.

139. According to officials interviewed, UNFPA includes knowledge-sharing responsibilities in all job descriptions. However, they acknowledged that there was still a lot of work to be done for such responsibilities to be adequately reflected in the annual work plans and performance appraisals of all staff. Despite the fact that they have long been included in job descriptions, knowledge management and knowledge sharing do not as yet constitute organizational competencies.

140. Indeed, the Inspector observed that knowledge management and knowledge sharing are not mentioned in either the core values or competencies in the revised UNFPA competency framework. Although knowledge is referred to in many competencies, "managing knowledge" is only showing as a component of the functional skill set Programme and Technical Delivery. The functional skill sets apply only to certain posts in the relevant divisions and programmes run by the regional offices and sub-offices. Overall, the absence of more specific knowledge management and knowledge-sharing competencies from the UNFPA Competency Framework neutralizes the positive impact of their inclusion in job descriptions, especially since staff members' performance is assessed against competencies and not job descriptions.

141. IFAD has incorporated knowledge sharing in its daily work by making sharing of knowledge of best practices a component of its core value of professionalism and integral part of its Competency Framework. That makes knowledge sharing a behaviour expected from all staff members for achieving the operational objectives of IFAD. Sharing and managing knowledge appear in the description of several organizational competencies of IFAD and are associated to learning and innovation.[59]

142. The ILO Core Competency and Values Framework adopted in 2009, combines knowledge sharing with orientation to learning as a core competency for staff at all levels. The definition states that such competency is demonstrated when staff "assimilates, applies and shares job-related knowledge in a timely manner". In order to demonstrate the basic competency, the staff member is expected to share important or relevant knowledge and information, formally or informally, and promote knowledge transfer.

143. In UNAIDS, all staff are required to demonstrate knowledge management and sharing as part of the core competency Applying Expertise.[60] This competency is about effectively applying the knowledge, skills and experience that staff bring to the organization. It also means applying knowledge and best practices, sharing knowledge and experience and encouraging others to do the same.

144. Knowledge sharing and organizational learning are given key consideration in the periodic performance management and development of peacekeepers. The policy adopted by DPKO and DFS requires peacekeeping personnel to include at least one activity associated with knowledge sharing and organizational learning in their personal development plans as part of their performance management and development.[61] Moreover, bearing in mind the key role played by managers in promoting knowledge sharing and organizational learning, hiring managers are strongly encouraged to include the competency Commitment to Continuous Learning, in the job descriptions of vacancies at the P-5 and higher levels.[62]

145. UNDP introduced knowledge management as one of the technical/functional competencies to be evaluated and defined it as the "ability to efficiently handle and share information and knowledge". Knowledge management is listed as one of the required professional competencies in most of the job descriptions in vacancy announcements.

[59] IFAD, *IFAD competency framework: How we give our best - Supporting performance enhancement* (2013).
[60] UNAIDS, *UNAIDS Secretariat Competency Framework*.
[61] DPKO and DFS, *Knowledge Sharing and Organizational Learning*, Policy (2015).
[62] Ibid.

146. UNIDO included the knowledge-sharing requirement in the fundamental competencies for most positions. Some senior management positions include knowledge management and knowledge sharing as functions in the terms of references.[63]

147. UNEP reported that knowledge management was an organization-wide responsibility and an integral part of staff work. Knowledge management responsibilities are translated directly into staff work plans at all levels, in accordance with the strategy in force, which requires that knowledge management has to "engage every division, office, and unit from day one and in every step of the process". In addition, UNEP managers have the responsibility for ensuring staff compliance with responsibilities relating to information sharing and knowledge sharing.[64]

148. Embedding knowledge sharing in job descriptions and staff performance objectives is one of the key objectives announced as part of UNESCO strategic directions, aimed at creating an environment where knowledge sharing is enabled by management and practiced by all staff.[65]

149. In its new strategy on knowledge management, WIPO acknowledged that "the activities relating to knowledge management need to become further embedded within the culture of the organization" and "staff members need to consider how knowledge management can assist them in their role and the impact upon corporate knowledge of every interaction they have with an information or knowledge asset". Therefore, its Strategic Objective 1 is to ensure that "knowledge management is considered an integral part of daily business routines and that WIPO staff understand their responsibilities".[66]

150. A few positions in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) include knowledge management tasks in the job description or the incumbent's work plan. The Standard Operating Procedures relating to the functions of geographic desk officers specifies that desk officers are responsible for "building and maintaining a knowledge base on the countries under their responsibility. This function is, however, unevenly covered owing to capacity constraints.

151. According to OCHA officials, knowledge management-related responsibilities may not be explicitly detailed in individual staff members' terms of reference or annual work plans, but they are part of the work plans of sections and units on an as-needed basis.

152. According to the UNICEF officials interviewed during the review, aspects of knowledge management are included in the functional competencies Applying Technical Expertise and Learning and Researching.

153. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance control and compliance.

Recommendation 3

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, should take incremental measures aimed at embedding knowledge management skills and knowledge-sharing abilities in their respective staff performance appraisal systems, annual work plans, job descriptions and organizational core competences, by the end of 2020.

[63] UNIDO, "UNIDO Secretariat Structure 2016", Director General's Bulletin (2016) (UNIDO/DGB/2016/01/Amend.1).
[64] UNEP, Knowledge Management Strategy 2014-2017 (2014).
[65] UNESCO, *KM & ICT Strategy* (December 2013), p. 16.
[66] WIPO, "The Knowledge Management Strategy of the World Intellectual Property Organization, 2015-2018" (2015) (A/55/INF/5).

VII. ENGAGING STAFF IN KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

154. The fourth element used as main criterion for reviewing the knowledge management preparedness of the United Nations system organizations was the existence of policies and training programmes aimed at enhancing the capacity, readiness and the proactive engagement of staff in relevant activities. The Inspector noted that, despite differences in knowledge management awareness and corporate practices, knowledge-sharing and learning processes as well as collaboration mechanisms are increasingly viewed as key organizational competencies.[67]

155. Attaining a high level of organizational preparedness requires that stimuli for learning are built into key processes and staff are enabled to routinely find out who knows what inside and outside the organization and get in contact with them. Effective knowledge sharing is supported by a common language, templates and guidelines.[68] The present review illustrates some existing knowledge management practices across the United Nations system that might serve to enhance organizational preparedness from a human resource perspective.

A. Knowledge reuse and retention

Induction

156. Most United Nations system organizations have induction programmes for new staff joining the system and/or the organization and/or a particular duty station. Induction provides new staff with the opportunity to familiarize themselves with basic organizational knowledge — not only with regard to administrative issues, but also substantive knowledge and knowledge management aspects.

157. For example, in 2014, IAEA established an induction process documented by: a Cover Note and Outline of the Newcomer Induction process; a high-level Process Map; and Induction Checklists for the newcomer and the supervisor. The induction checklists are based on a standard template, but can be personalized and customized to the role and tasks of the new staff member.

158. The template of the Induction Checklist for Newcomer takes the form of a checklist and clarifies responsibilities and timelines before and after the arrival of the new staff member, including the review of data prepared by the staff member's predecessor. The induction process in IAEA is relevant for the emphasis given to knowledge management responsibilities of both managers and staff members.

159. UNFPA and ESCWA also include a session on knowledge management in their induction programme for new staff.

Exit reporting and exit questionnaires

160. In IAEA the induction of newcomers relies also on proper handover of departing staff members. A new handover process that aims at knowledge retention and transfer was introduced in IAEA in 2015 and it is also reflected in the list of Agency-wide processes in the human resources management.

161. The 2011 Guidelines on that matter state that knowledge transfer should be initiated by the separating staff member's direct supervisor with a briefing and a gradual transfer of the staff member's major functions to a back-up staff member, one to three months before the staff member's separation from IAEA. An exit

[67] See Chris Collison and Geoff Parcell, *Learning to Fly, Practical Knowledge Management from Leading and Learning Organizations*, (Capstone, 2001), in which the authors describe five important organizational competencies: strategy development, management techniques, collaboration mechanisms, knowledge-sharing and learning processes, knowledge capture and storage.

[68] Ben Ramalingam, *Tools for Knowledge and Learning: A Guide for Development and Humanitarian Organisations*, Toolkit (London, Overseas Development Institute, July 2006), p. 12 - Figure 2: Matrix for the five competencies framework.

interview that is considered a knowledge transfer briefing with the staff member's supervisor takes place one week before the separation.

162. Another tool that is intended to capture and retain key knowledge relating to a post is the exit questionnaire. Such a questionnaire contributes to ensuring continuity of service and to facilitating the onboarding of the successor. Exit questionnaires on knowledge transfer contribute to retaining institutional knowledge; sharing knowledge through mobility/rotation assignments; documentation on procedures; debriefing on lessons learned after the conclusion of major projects or meetings.

163. For example, since 2009, UNIDO makes use of two such templates: the "exit interview questionnaire" and the "knowledge transfer notes".[69] As reviewed by the Inspector, the questionnaire does not serve the purpose of retaining substantive knowledge. It is designed in a way that the expected replies may be utilized to extract information about the career development rather than the acquired experience and tacit knowledge of the separating staff member.

164. The knowledge transfer notes, on the other hand, are comprehensive and fit for such purpose. They serve to identify critical knowledge and to ensure an efficient handover of functions and knowledge retention. Such notes must be prepared and submitted even when a staff member is reassigned within the organization (not only in cases of separation).

165. In 2008, UNFPA launched the use of mandatory knowledge transfer notes which are created by staff members who are leaving their posts. The notes are intended to ensure knowledge retention and contribute to an efficient handover of duties. The triple purpose of the notes is to identify the critical knowledge developed in specific functional areas, to ensure a smooth transition in cases of staff movements, and to facilitate access to "highly specialized or highly contextual knowledge". The separating staff member is provided with a document containing guidelines and templates to facilitate the creation of the knowledge transfer notes.

166. WFP, DPKO and DFS use after action reviews to capture the lessons learned from past action with the goal of improving future performance. They provide team members with the opportunity to reflect on a project or activity so that they may improve their performance in similar future circumstances. In addition, DPKO and DFS require senior managers to draft an end-of assignment report at the end of their tenure. End-of assignment reports and after action reviews are maintained on their intranet's "Policy and Practice Database", therefore, accessible to all peace operations' and Secretariat's personnel.

167. UNDP and UNICEF also make intensive use of after action reviews and have step-by-step guides on their use in their respective toolkits.[70] UNICEF also facilitates organization-wide information sharing through its "Five Questions" interviews. The interviews are conducted with senior management or experts on the mandate and priority areas of UNICEF and posted on the intranet. They may be commented on by staff members.

168. UNESCO introduced a systematic knowledge transfer initiative as part of its check-out procedures, in which staff separating from the Organization are obliged to leave all records of institutional relevance, including printed and electronic documents, email communications. Additionally, they must fill in a knowledge transfer form by which "soft knowledge" (experiences, lessons learned, networks, good practices) is captured and transmitted to supervisors and colleagues.

169. DPKO and DFS have the most advanced practice in the United Nations Secretariat and have developed an interesting and useful knowledge reuse and retention policy. Staff not only have the opportunity to write

[69] UNIDO/PSM/HRM/INF.107 (1 September 2009).

[70] UNDP, *Knowledge Management Toolkit for the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Practice Area* (March 2007); and UNICEF, *Knowledge Exchange Toolbox: Group methods for sharing, discovery and co-creation* (2015).

down their experiences and identify lessons learned in action, but once a year, they have at their disposal a "stand-down day" specifically devoted to knowledge sharing, so they are free of their routine obligations.

170. OCHA reported that it had a formal practice of handover notes, but knowledge is not systematically captured and used. The exit process formally includes exit interviews, in particular at the end of assignments in the framework of surge deployment. DPA reported that its similar exit process concerns senior staff.

171. On separation, ICAO staff are required to complete a knowledge transfer exit questionnaire to capture key knowledge relating to their role or function so as to contribute to ensuring continuity of service and facilitating the onboarding of the successor.

172. Likewise, the Inspector was informed about the establishment in ILO of a system of exit interviews with staff moving within the organization or separating from the organization.

173. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to enhance efficiency.

Recommendation 4

The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, should establish norms and procedures for the retention and transfer of knowledge from retiring, moving, or departing staff, as part of the organizations' succession planning processes.

Creating incentives

174. The ECA Knowledge Management Strategy recognizes that "people are motivated to participate when it is good for their career – when they are recognized and rewarded for being an outstanding professional willing to share valuable experience".[71]

175. UNDP launched an internal project across business units to look at the current incentive dynamics: what incentives do work for different operational and programmatic outcomes, which new ones should be added and how to complement internal incentives with incentives that can be given to countries and partners.[72]

176. Similarly, DPKO and DFS as well as WIPO stated in their respective knowledge management strategies and policies that they would take steps to put in place incentives to reward knowledge sharing and acknowledge the value of individual staff contributions.

177. **The Inspector recommends that the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations, if they have not already done so, recognize, acknowledge and stimulate knowledge sharing by developing viable moral incentives or symbolic rewards to encourage and acknowledge the work of knowledge promoters among their staff.**

B. Communities of practice, knowledge networks and dialogue platforms

178. Knowledge management is a participative process par excellence in which a proactive attitude on the part of knowledge workers is essential. Formal action is a sine qua non condition but, without conscious informal involvement and awareness of staff, a knowledge management system will not produce the expected results. Decisions and empowering guidelines and frameworks are essential to stimulate staff involvement in

[71] ECA, *The ECA Knowledge Management Strategy* (2014), p. 31.

[72] UNDP, *UNDP Knowledge Management Strategy Framework 2014-2017* (2014), p. 19.

knowledge creation, sharing and use, to the extent that direct and voluntary participation of the staff is allowed and encouraged. These are the prerequisites that give birth to communities of practice.

179. The key ingredient for a community of practice is a group of people with a defined area of professional interest working on a common body of knowledge in their respective organizations. Communities of practice vary greatly depending on membership composition and purpose. In the World Bank Group, there has been a proliferation of communities of practice. Based on data collected by the present review, about 400 such communities exist to date.

180. According to the information made available to the Inspector, the first knowledge networks or communities of practice in the United Nations system were established in 1999 by UNDP. They were originally set up as a capacity-building mechanism for staff and as a bridge between headquarters and UNDP country offices, as well as to promote South-South exchange.

181. In ECA, professional staff are responsible for coordinating the substantive aspects of the communities of practice in their areas of expertise and designated staff members are in charge of organizing forums, online discussions and posting documents on the website. A dedicated online platform, entitled "African Knowledge for Development Networks",[73] serves as a mechanism to build relations among practitioners and government entities working on economic, social and human development issues through communities of practice.

182. In UNICEF, the community of practice on knowledge management comprises 763 members.

183. The OCHA Learning and Knowledge Management Board was introduced to reinforce the OCHA Strategic Framework from the perspective of advancing knowledge management in the Office, including the creation of communities of practice.

184. UNICEF uses its intranet platform, ICON, to enhance knowledge sharing through storytelling and an online learning platform, Agora, for sharing programmatic and operational learning with staff and partners.

185. ILO created eight global technical teams with a view to enhancing the relevance and technical quality of the organization's work as well as its ability to Deliver as One. Meetings and other exchanges within and among the teams are intended to generate cross-fertilization of resources and expertise to develop knowledge and update skills to serve the needs of constituents in countries with different levels of development.

186. In the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), the Knowledge Network is an inclusive community of knowledge where knowledge generators, policymakers and practitioners proactively participate in sharing, interacting and accessing of relevant resources to be able to stimulate the creation, dissemination and application of knowledge in tourism. It comprises universities and knowledge centres interacting, sharing and accessing information.

187. IAEA developed extensively global networks with collaborative and informative web-platforms that facilitate informal professional networks in order to promote the exchange of information and expertise and solve common problems with external counterparts.

188. ITU regularly interacts with informal professional networks in both the private and public sectors, for the implementation of some activities, in particular capacity-building. UNFPA interacts with the private sector through webinars.

[73] ECA, African Knowledge for Development Networks (http://knowledge4africa.uneca.org/).

189. However, the mere existence of communities of practice is not a guarantee of their effective use. For example, according to the officials interviewed, UN-Women communities of practice did not reach a critical mass of participation and ended up being only a collection of webmail addresses without any interactive contributions.

190. **The Inspector recommends that the executive heads of United Nations system organizations sponsor the use of communities of practice in their respective organizations, as a means of stimulating interaction, knowledge sharing and solution searching within their respective organizations and system-wide. To do that, they should, in particular, task the communities of practice with debating, brainstorming and reporting on topics in their areas of expertise and take their conclusions into account, when appropriate, in decision-making.**

C. Developing knowledge management skills

Training in knowledge management

191. The United Nations System Staff College used to offer specialized courses in knowledge management until 2014. The College is currently integrating knowledge management with innovation and creativity. The first attempt to link the two topics was made in early 2016 with the tutored online course entitled "Processes for innovation, networking and knowledge".

192. UNFPA offers stand-alone learning initiatives for specific elements of knowledge management and courses targeting specific categories of staff. The UNODC eLearning platform offers modules aimed at standardizing knowledge and knowledge management.

A Handbook

193. The World Bank Group published in 2016 "a handbook for scaling up solutions through knowledge capturing and sharing",[74] a systematic guide on how to build the enabling environment and develop the skills needed to capture and share knowledge gained from operational experience. The handbook is informed by academic literature on knowledge management and organization learning, but grounded on the insights gained from the collaboration with ministries and national agencies operating in various development-related areas. It contains all the essential knowledge management constructs and concepts, a glossary, guidelines for drafting strategies, and concrete examples of knowledge management and knowledge-sharing practices.

Knowledge management toolkits

194. Another way to develop knowledge management skills is by producing user-friendly toolkits. In 2015, UNICEF produced the Knowledge Exchange Toolbox,[75] which describes group methods for sharing, discovery and co-creation and incorporates a quick guide to choosing a tool that can be used separately.[76] During the review, the Inspector learned that this comprehensive toolbox is also used by staff in other organizations. In 2011, WHO produced a manual entitled "Tools and techniques to support knowledge networking and virtual collaborations".[77]

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[74] Steffen Soulejman Janus, *Becoming a Knowledge-Sharing Organization: A Handbook for Scaling Up Solutions through Knowledge Capturing and Sharing* (Washington, D.C., World Bank, 2016).

[75] UNICEF, *Knowledge Exchange Toolbox: Group methods for sharing, discovery and co-creation* (2015).

[76] UNICEF, A quick guide to choosing a tool (www.unicef.org/knowledge-exchange/files/entry_points_production.pdf).

[77] WHO, *Tools and techniques to support knowledge networking and virtual collaborations: knowledge, sharing, information, exchange* (2011) (WHO/RHR 10.24).

195. The 2007 Knowledge Management Kit developed by UNDP for the crisis prevention and recovery practice area[78] can also be used by other United Nations system organizations that do not have the resources to create their own product. It contains basic knowledge management concepts, templates, techniques conceived through a practical and action-oriented approach.

196. In 2011, OHCHR developed in collaboration with the International Training Centre of ILO (ITCILO) the online toolkit *"Share, learn, innovate! Methods and technologies to share human rights knowledge and ideas"* to enhance knowledge-sharing practices within OHCHR and through its activities.[79] This toolkit presents methods and technologies drawn from other knowledge management toolkits within and outside the United Nations and adapted to the OHCHR context.

197. It should be noted that both the UNICEF and WHO knowledge products describe general methods of knowledge creation and valorisation that can be applied to different contexts and not only in their areas of competence. **The Inspector recommends that the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations consider taking steps to disseminate the knowledge management toolkits produced by other United Nations system organizations for use, as appropriate, in their respective organizations.**

D. Improving access to knowledge

Knowledge portals

198. During the review, the Inspector was informed about a number of initiatives aimed at systematizing knowledge by means of knowledge portals. While he does not have an exhaustive list of the most recent or relevant knowledge portals, a few illustrations may be useful in the spirit of knowledge sharing among United Nations system organizations. Administrators of knowledge portals system-wide or potential developers of such portals may find the existing practices useful as good practices to be emulated. More importantly, they may inspire ways and means to merge or link such portals into an all-inclusive system-wide portal, which can play a role in relation to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

199. In 2010, UNEP created the Law and Environment Ontology portal[80] to provide an overview of concepts, definitions and synonyms in conventions as well as the relationship between different Multilateral Environmental Agreements. According to the initiators, this is the first time that the United Nations environmental and legal communities have come together on such a scale[81] to provide much-needed information and knowledge on environmental law in a way that is freely accessible and user-friendly.

200. IAEA also has a portal for communicating the outcomes and activities of its Interdepartmental Steering Group on Corporate Knowledge Management (ISG/CKM) and its cross-departmental teams. The portal is available to senior managers and staff involved in knowledge management and was expected to be made accessible to IAEA staff at large by the end of 2016.

Capacity Building Marketplace

201. The United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification (UNCCD) Capacity Building Marketplace is a collaborative platform aimed at bringing needs and possible solutions together. It links demand and supply in relation to capacity-building within the framework of the Convention. Users can share their experiences and

[78] UNDP, *Knowledge Management Toolkit for the Crisis Prevention and Recovery Practice Area* (2007).
[79] See: http://slitoolkit.ohchr.org/.
[80] See http://leo.informea.org/.
[81] The portal is a repository for more than 105,000 national laws, 2,000 cases, some 5,000 national reports, 500 action plans, over 2,000 global, regional and bilateral environmental conventions and 10,000 decisions of governing bodies.

new ideas, increase their knowledge and skills from various sources, find out what is happening in the world of capacity-building globally and have direct influence on the future development of the platform.

202. The services announced in the Marketplace include fellowships, jobs, consultancies; e-learning modules, online training and crowdfunding opportunities; a calendar of activities and events of Convention-related capacity-building; and grants for study and research. The Marketplace brings together interested parties from governmental, private sector, civil society or academic spheres and provides the opportunity for all to interact and engage in transactions.

203. Although the platform is intended to serve the specific objectives related to the Convention, its collaborative nature and its action-oriented structure, which illustrate both diversity of means and unity in purpose, may serve as an example for United Nations system-wide collaborative platforms in service of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Knowledge fairs

204. Some organizations have organized knowledge fairs or knowledge-share fairs, face-to-face events in which participants set up displays to share their knowledge management undertaking. FAO is among the organizers of such events, especially with the Rome-based United Nations system organizations. The most recent knowledge fair was the XIII United Nations Inter-Agency Round Table on Communication for Development, hosted by FAO in Rome in September 2014. The round table focused on how communication can improve the quality of policy processes through wider access to information, greater citizen-government interaction, public- and private-sector partnerships and knowledge sharing.

205. UNDP coordinated the first South-South Cooperation fair for Latin American and Caribbean countries, entitled "Knowledge from the South: Regional Exchange of Solutions", held in the City of Knowledge,[82] in Panama City in 2012. The fair brought together 300 participants, representing 33 projects and experiences in 24 countries, who acknowledged the role of the United Nations system organizations as articulators of information and good practices between regions, including the promotion information platforms. Many knowledge fairs had already been organized in Latin American and Caribbean countries and elsewhere between 2002 and 2010.

206. In 2011, UNDP published a guide[83] containing a collection of the main lessons learned by UNDP and its partners in Latin America and the Caribbean from planning, organizing and monitoring knowledge fairs. The guide targets organizations or project teams interested in promoting experiences, transferring knowledge and giving feedback to peers. Yet, the practice of organizing knowledge fairs has been discontinued.

Solution Exchange

207. UNDP introduced the Solution Exchange, initiated in 2005 as a three-year pilot project by the United Nations country team in India. Conceived as a United Nations knowledge-sharing facilitation service for communities of practice of development professionals, seven United Nations agencies convened 12 professional groups, comprising approximately 15,000 professionals, to address selected development targets emanating from India's Five-Year Plan and themes relating to the Millennium Development Goals, which contributed to their successful achievement. The initiative included performance and impact indicators noted for their clarity and robustness.

[82] The City of Knowledge (*Ciudad del Saber*) in Panama is a large campus that hosts a multinational community, including United Nations system organizations, non-governmental organizations and public- and private-sector education and research institutes that foster international cooperation and exchanges with the objective of creating conditions for human and sustainable development based on knowledge. See: http://ciudaddelsaber.org/en.

[83] See UNDP, *2 Knowledge Fairs: Mechanism for horizontal transfer and knowledge exchange* (2011). Available at www.shareweb.ch/site/Learning-and-Networking/sdc_km_tools/Documents/Knowledge%20Fair_Undp.pdf.

208. An independent evaluation of the Solution Exchange concluded that the initiative had "impacted programme implementation, influenced national policies, improved capacities of individuals, enhanced knowledge and changed attitudes".[84] In 2010, another evaluation concluded that "despite the fact the primary function of Solution Exchange was not policy impact, it has in fact had an impact on the policy process in several important development sectors especially at the pre-policy formulation stage".[85] The inter-agency initiative was discontinued owing to lack of financing, although some of the United Nations agencies in India continued with individual communities of practice.

209. The Solution Exchange has resurfaced in other countries and regions among UNDP and other United Nations system agencies. Noteworthy efforts are going on in the UNDP Pacific Office (Pacific Climate Change and Development Community) and in ECA (Communities of African Development Planners and Statistical Professionals).

E. Emerging initiatives in knowledge management for the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development

210. The Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development was established by the United Nations System Staff College in 2016. Its mission is to respond to the learning, training and knowledge management needs of United Nations staff and partners in a comprehensive manner, in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

211. The Centre is committed to facilitating catalytic learning across the United Nations system in accordance with the new approaches to knowledge and skills development for all actors concerned by the sustainable development agenda by promoting "holistic thinking, moving beyond separate mandates and structures and exploring linkages between different thematic issues".

212. The implementation of the following recommendation is expected to promote coordination and cooperation and enhance transparency.

Recommendation 5

The Secretary-General should take measures to optimize the potential of the United Nations System Staff College Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development by, inter alia, requesting the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the United Nations Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD), the United Nations University (UNU) and the United Nations System Staff College Knowledge Centre for Sustainable Development to jointly design and conduct training programmes on knowledge management adapted to the holistic principles underlying the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Such training programmes should promote, in an integrated way, the management of knowledge produced by and intended for use by all stakeholders interested in or associated with the activities of the United Nations system.

213. Subsequently, other interested United Nations system entities, like the International Training Centre of ILO (ITCILO), may join in.

[84] Smita Premchander and Richard McDermott, "Project Evaluation of Solution Exchange" (New Delhi, UNCT India, 2007) cited in "Solution Exchange India: End-of-assignment Report", Steve Glovinsky (June 2008), p. 20.

[85] Priya Deshingkar and others, "Formative evaluation of Solution Exchange", (London, Overseas Development Institute, August 2010).

Towards a knowledge ecosystem in Geneva

214. The United Nations Office in Geneva will create a "SDG Lab", an entity aimed at acting as a convener, a facilitator, catalyst, broker and activator helping all actors interested in the Sustainable Development Agenda to meet and exchange information, ideas and experiences and turn expertise and knowledge acquired into practice. The Lab intends to work in partnership with United Nations system entities and other stakeholders in and outside the system.[86]

215. In the same vein, the United Nations Library at Geneva took the initiative of a knowledge ecosystem comprising of United Nations and non-United Nations partners in Geneva and beyond. The long term vision of the Library is to evolve into a centre of research and exchange dedicated, inter alia, to supporting global problem solving through knowledge mobilization and institutional memory. The initiators hope to stimulate the activation of a globalized network of United Nations Libraries and Knowledge Centres.

Climate Change Brokers

216. The Climate Knowledge Brokers (CKB) Group is an alliance of organizations and professionals focused on improving the quality and use of climate knowledge in decision-making. Knowledge brokers act as filters, interfaces and translators between knowledge producers and users across different disciplines, fields and sectors. According to the Group's Manifesto, the use of knowledge is more effective if the knowledge production process is transparent, participatory and user focused. Support of decision-making processes can be enhanced through collaboration, knowledge sharing, and using the potential of digital technology. The Group is open to all organizations and professionals working to deliver tailored climate knowledge to those who need it, especially in developing countries.[87]

F. Towards a system-wide collaborative platform: a case study

217. Despite the existence of some relevant dialogue and collaboration platforms in the United Nations system, none has emerged thus far as an ideal, system-wide option that would unite the entire United Nations family on a collaborative knowledge-sharing platform around the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its new approach. Besides the tradition of working in silos, there is also one aggravating factor, namely, the fact that many decisions on ICT purchases are technology-driven, without enough knowledge-management considerations. The Inspector is of the view that knowledge management needs should be the main driving factor in the selection of technological hardware and software, taking into account also the potential of their use system-wide.

218. On one hand, this is not surprising given the diversity of technological options and constant changes, which also lead to higher costs. From the perspective of a system-wide knowledge management integrative approach, ICT becomes part of the problem rather than the solution.

219. On the other hand, there is no system-wide coordination or, at least, exchange of basic information about the decision factors for purchasing ICT tools, other than technical or cost-related ones. The incompatibilities among some elements of the technological infrastructure have apparently led to incompatibilities in system-wide approaches for cooperation and interaction.

220. Nonetheless, in the absence of an optimal option, the Inspector finds it useful to present a case study, which may be tried out and which could evolve in time towards that aim.

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[86] Michael Møller, Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva, remarks made at "Time to Deliver the 2030 Agenda: A Geneva seminar on Galvanizing Global Action", Geneva, 4 November 2016.

[87] Florian Bauer, James Smith (editors), *The Climate Knowledge Brokers Manifesto, Informed decision making for a climate resilient future*, Renewable Energy and Energy Efficiency Partnership, Vienna (2015).

221. The case study starts from the longstanding experience of UNDP in the field and its areas of competence, which are thematically broader than the mandates of many United Nations specialized agencies, programmes and funds, and also takes into account the experience acquired by UNICEF.

222. The panoply of tools used by UNDP knowledge management work includes a corporate social networking platform entitled UN Teamworks. Created in 2009, the platform is used for knowledge exchange through public dialogues and online consultations, such as the Rio+20 Online Dialogues, MyWorld 2015, the Post-2015 Consultations and the Online Consultations for the World Humanitarian Summit 2016.

223. In 2012, UN Teamworks was qualified by the Knowledge Management Austria (KMA)[88] as "the most promising knowledge management initiative within the UN focusing on knowledge management networking within a global knowledge partnership".

224. Building on its experience with UN Teamworks, UNDP is currently transitioning its corporate platform for internal knowledge exchange from Teamworks to Yammer, an off-the-shelf peer networking tool that, unlike Teamworks, is integrated into the Microsoft Office 365 enterprise package. Since early 2016, UNDP has been working to transfer active communities of practice from Teamworks to Yammer. UNICEF has owned the Yammer platform since 2009 and has been supporting it as the official enterprise social networking tool within the organization since 2015. In addition to these corporate networks, UNDP, together with the United Nations Development Operations Coordination Office (DOCO) of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG), launched a new Network named "One UN Knowledge Exchange Network on Yammer", in September 2016.

225. This new online platform is intended to create a knowledge exchange environment to connect practitioners across agencies, regions and thematic areas, and has the potential of bringing together communities of practitioners and United Nations country teams globally. More importantly, the staff of any United Nations system organization and duty station worldwide will be able to engage in ad-hoc informal exchanges with colleagues from different United Nations system organizations and geographic locations.

226. Since its launch, the One UN Knowledge Exchange on Yammer has brought together the informal but robust knowledge management network that was created by the Chief of the Learning and Knowledge Exchange in UNICEF and the knowledge management work carried out within the United Nations space on Teamworks, by inviting their members to migrate to the platform and to participate in inter-agency discussions in one consolidated community space.

227. The JIU team that prepared the present report on knowledge management also integrated the platform and introduced in the discussion several knowledge management elements.

228. Similarly, the former sub-group of the informal network called "KM in the UN Agencies" – an initiative aiming at opening and stimulating a dialogue among Geneva-based United Nations system organizations - also became a member of the new network.

229. Moreover, according to the promoters of the platform, in the absence of a single system-wide and inter-agency directory in which one could find and contact peers or experts and practitioners with similar interests across the system, the One UN Knowledge Exchange on Yammer can serve as a starting point in that direction. If more and more United Nations system organizations use Yammer as their corporate social networking tool, it could serve as an internal United Nations system-wide experts and expertise directory that would provide the opportunity for staff to directly interact with colleagues around the world.

[88] Knowledge Management Austria (KMA) is Vienna-based knowledge partnership with a triple institutional personality: Knowledge Management Associates, a private entity that provides knowledge management-related advisory services and consultancy; Knowledge Management Academy, which offers training for knowledge managers; and Knowledge Management Austria, which provides a scientific basis and services for the management of knowledge in business and societies.

230. In other words, with the support of two major United Nations funds and programmes, UNICEF and UNDP, and the coordination of UNDG-DOCO, the young platform is a promising embryo of a future system-wide network, in which other networks can gradually be consolidated, within existing resources, provided that the dialogue will incrementally be better focused on specific topics and recognized at senior management level[89].

231. **The Inspector recommends that the executive heads of the United Nations system organizations encourage knowledge brokers in their respective organizations to migrate to the One UN Knowledge Exchange Network on Yammer, to utilize the platform and to report back on its strengths and weaknesses as well as on its potential to become a system-wide collaborative platform.**

VIII. MEASURING THE IMPACT OF KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT

A. The challenge of measurability

232. Measuring the impact is a major challenge in designing and implementing knowledge management strategies and policies as one cannot measure what has been prevented. Knowledge management prevents waste of money, waste of time and waste of human resources. For example, it is difficult to quantify the time spent looking for the right information, or the cost of reproducing knowledge that already exists somewhere else or using obsolete instead of up-to-date information, or the money wasted in investing in technology without assessing its potential to improve the availability and accessibility of knowledge. Moreover, when organizations do not have policies on the retention of the tacit knowledge acquired by staff over many years of individual and organizational experience, the loss of tacit knowledge when a staff member leaves the organization represents a devaluation of the human imprint on knowledge resources.

233. Even in private companies where an increase in the number of new clients or in the amount of profit or turnover can be attributed to better knowledge of markets, the usefulness of knowledge management initiatives may be questioned "as the business impact of such initiatives often can be hardly quantified or is only indirectly measurable".[90] Measurability in relation to knowledge management is a topic that has been studied, written about and debated extensively. However, there are few definitive findings on practical methods that are easy to understand and apply to measure knowledge management initiatives and their impact in both the public and the private sector.[91]

234. As observed during the review, in most of the United Nations system organizations reviewed, the consequences of the absence of knowledge management policies are perceived and understood in the daily activities of staff and managers — in particular, with regard to the waste of time and resources. However, these forms of waste are generally ignored as an "intangible non-value", as often they cannot be attributed to something or somebody in particular.

235. Despite this challenge, which was anticipated prior to and confirmed by the present review, the Inspector noted direct or indirect positive impacts of knowledge management efficiency on the organizations' operations, as the fifth element of the preparedness framework.

B. Incipient practices

236. Some United Nations system organizations have made efforts to develop indicators to assess the impact of knowledge management strategies and policies on their performance. IFAD, ECA, UNDP and ESCWA

[89] Various other technology platforms and tools used for knowledge exchange by individual organizations in the United Nations system are published as annex II to the report on the JIU website (www.jiu.org).

[90] Florian Resatsch and Ulrich Faisst, "Measuring the performance of knowledge management initiatives", (Berlin, Institute of Electronic Business and Augsburg, Competence Centre IT and Financial Services).

[91] Robert Hoss and Art Schlussel, "Metrics that assess an organization's KM state", (Pennsylvania, United States Army War College, 2009). Available at www.digitalgovernment.com/media/Downloads/asset_upload_file66_2654.pdf.

have all, to some extent, embarked upon systematic and programmatic attempts in that direction, by foreseeing metrics as part of their knowledge management strategies.

237. An advanced use of indicators in knowledge management appears to be envisaged by IFAD. The organization has developed indicators or measures of success as well as means of verification for each knowledge-related activity. The indicators were included in the knowledge management results framework and customized for all objectives associated with the key result areas in the IFAD Knowledge Management Framework 2014-2018.

238. The ECA knowledge management strategy focuses on maximizing access to and utilization of knowledge and proposes that ECA establish and track "success indicators" to determine whether a product/policy idea is having the desired effect in influencing national, subregional or regional policymaking. Quality assurance arrangements include criteria for the impact of knowledge management on the performance of the organization.

Box 6: Performance criteria used by ECA

a) Connections (vitality of the knowledge networks created, following standardized indicators for membership activity and its influence);
b) Knowledge engineering (case-by-case indicators on specific business processes);
c) Collections (ease-of-use for the search criteria and customization features determined through periodic user feedback surveys);
d) Services (feedback on quality and timeliness of responses to service requests);
e) Programme management and coordination (through quality assurance).

Source: ECA, *The ECA Knowledge Management Strategy: Managing the Knowledge of a Knowledge Organization* (March 2014), p. 37.

239. UNDP admits in its current strategy that metrics and indicators for successful knowledge management are underdeveloped. It also notes that the potential of evidence-based statistics, including social network analysis, for incentives, business intelligence and informed decision-making is underutilized. Consequently, its knowledge management strategy contains a vision on measurement, which is assumed as a priority. UNDP plans to develop a detailed knowledge management performance indicator framework with metrics and tracking mechanisms across country and regional offices as well as at headquarters. UNDP intends also to integrate knowledge management elements effectively into its results-based management framework.

240. In ESCWA, the implementation of the knowledge management strategy will be monitored and evaluated against a work plan and a set of indicators yet to be agreed.[92] The results of the evaluation will be used to formulate the next strategy, if necessary.

241. Measuring the impact of knowledge management is work in progress, but the nascent experience in this direction is worth being continued. **The Inspector recommends that the experience acquired by the pioneering organizations in the area of metrics and the impact of using knowledge management indicators should be shared among communities of practice, and the conclusions should be reported on to the top managerial level.**

C. External recognition

242. The work accomplished in the area of knowledge management by some United Nations system organizations has also been noted and recognized by non-government, private and academic actors. For example, IAEA (2010), UNESCO (2011 and 2015) and UNDP (2012) received awards from Knowledge

[92] ESCWA, *ESCWA Knowledge Management Strategy: Towards Vision 2030* (2015), p. 10 and annex 3.

Management Austria (KMA). In 2016, the KMA award went to the Knowledge Management for Development (KM4Dev), a global community of international development practitioners, including many experts who work or have worked with United Nations system organizations. Among its activities, KMA implements a long-standing initiative on Knowledge Cities and consults regularly in that regard with UN-Habitat.

Box 7: Agenda Knowledge for Development

Knowledge Management Austria (KMA) took the lead in developing the Agenda Knowledge for Development, which is designed to complement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development by providing an integrated approach to knowledge-related challenges that directly influence the achievement of the Goals. The knowledge for development agenda is a work in progress. It is being developed by an international coalition of civil society organizations, enterprises and academic. It is based on the vision that knowledge has a societal and economic transformational power that can be harnessed for development in a global knowledge ecosystem. According to the initiators, all the Sustainable Development Goals are associated with knowledge and they cannot be achieved without a systematic and integrated approach to knowledge.

Source: Knowledge Management Austria (http://www.km-a.net/english/k4dev/).

IX. CONCLUSIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

A. Why is knowledge management needed?

243. The advent of knowledge management was initially met by some with untempered enthusiasm, and by others with a degree of scepticism. The former believed that the happy marriage between the huge amount of data and information available and the rapid development of information and communications technologies would automatically lead to a higher degree of knowledge utilization and reduction in costs. The latter, more sceptical, considered knowledge management to be yet another fashionable, but ephemeral, buzzword. There was also a third category of actors who felt that there was nothing new about the concept, as knowledge had always been managed in one way or another.

244. Against this background, knowledge management came of age and established itself as both an academic discipline and a professional field of practice. A somewhat similar evolution was noted in the United Nations system, although at a slower pace. The main reason is that, in private sector practice, the results were easier to measure — number of customers, expansion of markets, raise in profits, etc. Not only could the United Nations not pick and choose its clients — Member States and vulnerable groups of population in need of assistance across five continents — but the United Nations also has to cooperate with a broad array of sister organizations and external partners.

245. That makes knowledge management and knowledge sharing even more complicated for the United Nations system. In addition, the knowledge base for United Nations policies, programmes and actions is under intense scrutiny by contributing stakeholders and the public at large. While some knowledge is publicly available, other knowledge is very sensitive in nature and consequently subject to protection.

246. In order to trigger initiatives, there is a need to understand why knowledge management is needed. Without aspiring to produce an exhaustive list of arguments, first and foremost the Inspector believes that for the United Nations system – whose available resources do depend on Member States – the knowledge base, which comes in association with organizational values, is its main sustainable comparative advantage. The

United Nations system should handle with care the unique knowledge it produces in a world where some services can be delivered by non-governmental organizations and even private entities.

247. Knowledge as an asset must be cultivated and shared within the United Nations system organizations and across the system, when necessary, as the beneficiaries are the same Member States and their populations. Knowledge that is not captured in a way that strengthens and enriches the institutional memory and the ability of an organization to deliver can be lost, devalued or simply ignored. Alternatively, the same knowledge will be inevitably reproduced at additional costs, even if it existed before in the system.

248. Knowledge management activities may still be considered as "optional" when pitted against face value of the dollar only. The prevention of errors and the savings that are often achieved through better use of existing knowledge are practically invisible in accounting terms. Overspending of money is easily detectable, while overspending in terms of time and human resources is almost neglected. Knowledge management benefits do not come either directly or overnight; they are far-reaching and hard to measure.[93]

249. Several knowledge management benefits were acknowledged and emphasized during the review:

a) Improved organizational effectiveness by ensuring that programmes are designed based on the latest knowledge, capitalizing on past experience and expertise acquired by the staff;

b) Improved organizational efficiency and reduced costs through strengthening the ability to respond quickly to emerging issues on the ground, rapid mobilization of organizational expertise and experience, avoidance of previous mistakes and duplication of efforts;

c) Facilitation of the adoption of an integrated approach to programming, by establishing and empowering communities of practice and networks that cut across sectors and geographic locations.

250. Knowledge management is less and less an optional tool for leaders. Donors are moving towards specific evaluation of the ways in which organizations manage knowledge, in the context of assessing the effectiveness of multilateral organizations. For example, for the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network (MOPAN),[94] *knowledge management* is one of the four essential dimensions against which organizational effectiveness is assessed, besides *strategic management*, *operational management*, and *relationship management*. With regard to knowledge management MOPAN established criteria to determine whether a multilateral organization has reporting mechanisms and learning strategies that facilitate the sharing of information inside and outside the organization, with the international development community. Such criteria may be work in progress, but it is likely that this dimension of evaluation will increase in importance in a highly competitive environment. Already MOPAN assessed 11 United Nations system organizations between 2011 and 2015 by using such criteria.

251. The Inspector acknowledges the increasing importance of the role of the evaluation function as part of a knowledge management framework. Indeed, evaluative knowledge is the knowledge that derives from evaluations and is understood as being knowledge that allows judgments to be made about the effectiveness of programmes and policies by decision makers and policymakers. Therefore, both external and internal evaluations and evaluators can be regarded as part of the wider knowledge management framework. In that way, evaluations are a learning tool rather than only an accountability and oversight tool.

[93] Michael E. D. Koenig and T. Kanti Srikantaiah, eds., *Knowledge Management Lessons Learned: What Works and What Doesn't* (Medford, New Jersey, American Society for Information Science and Technology, 2004), p. 128.

[94] MOPAN is a network of 18 donor countries (Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Republic of Korea, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the United States of America) with a common interest in assessing the organizational effectiveness of multilateral organizations that receive development and humanitarian funding.

252. The implementation of the following recommendations is expected to disseminate good practices, strengthen coherence and harmonization and enhance transparency and accountability, coordination and cooperation, and enhance efficiency.

Recommendation 6
The executive heads of the United Nations system organizations with long-standing and comprehensive experience in knowledge management should take the lead in introducing in the agenda of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) an item dedicated to knowledge management, so as to provide an opportunity for sharing, at a strategic level, experiences, good practices and lessons learned, with a view to gradually developing a common, system-wide knowledge management culture.

Recommendation 7
The General Assembly should include in its agenda an item or sub-item dedicated to knowledge management in the United Nations system and request that a report be submitted by the Secretary-General, with contributions from members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) on system-wide best practices and initiatives in the area of knowledge management that support the holistic, integrated and collaborative approach of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.

B. Knowledge management: breaking down silos in the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

253. The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the most ambitious and comprehensive document adopted by the United Nations since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It was conceived as an unprecedented expression of multilateral, integrative and trans-disciplinary work.

254. A new underlying approach is expected to operate in the implementation of the agenda. While the Millennium Development Goals were a collection of separate objectives, the 2030 Agenda is universal and indivisible. It aims to bring together the three main pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, development and human rights. It aspires to gather about 65 United Nations entities to move away from fragmentation, duplication and working in silos. As all Member States are committed to implementing the 2030 Agenda, the United Nations system is also expected to fuel more collaborative patterns and synergies at the national level.

255. With the bar raised that high, it appears that knowledge can play the role as the ultimate federative factor of the 17 goals and 169 targets. Knowledge is the main connector among United Nations Charter organs, specialized agencies, funds and programmes and the multitude of non-State stakeholders. Knowledge is the common denominator of all United Nations mandates and actions and transcends thematic and geographic borders. More than goods, services and capital, knowledge is what fuels the dynamics of our globalized and interdependent world.

256. The United Nations system is the generator and disseminator of a special kind of knowledge, one based on values, solidarity and social justice. It was knowledge about all potentially conflicting spheres of interaction that makes possible cooperation among Member States, irrespective of their size and location, in so many areas of high complexity and diversity: from outer space to the highs seas, from communications to trade, from health to intellectual property, to name but a few.

257. Knowledge implies lessons learned from the past, but also new ideas and concepts. The United Nations is not just an honest broker and facilitator among donors and recipients of development assistance, nor is it a

conveyor belt of financial resources from the developed to the developing world. Rather, as a promoter of development cooperation, the United Nations is a disseminator of knowledge.

258. The institutional knowledge of the United Nations needs to be better valorised. The use of financial resources without value-based knowledge is a waste. Investment in technologies without full consideration of their potential in valorising knowledge management and human creativity is meaningless. In order to be more than a good concept, the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development needs the active mobilization of knowledge generated and shared in the service of global public goods by the United Nations system in a systematic and cooperative way.

259. From this perspective, the role of knowledge management in efficiently and coherently mobilizing the human and intellectual resources of the United Nations in the service of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development must not be underestimated. Moreover, knowledge and knowledge management can motivate the United Nations system organizations to break down the silos of work that JIU has so often deplored in its reports.

260. **The Inspector recommends that the Secretary-General of the United Nations identify, analyse, and promote those knowledge management initiatives and innovative actions taken outside the United Nations system by non-governmental organizations, private sector entities and academia, which can be coalesced at a system-wide level in support of the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.**

ANNEXES I-II

Annexes I-II are published only on the JIU website (www.unjiu.org) together with the report

I. The results of the survey on perception of knowledge management in the United Nations system

II. Technology platforms and other tools used for knowledge exchange in the United Nations system

Attachment I

GLOSSARY*

Best practice: An improvement in a particular process, approach, technique, or subject matter; knowledge that is good enough to replace an existing practice and general enough to merit being disseminated widely throughout an organization. A "good work practice" or innovative approach that is captured and shared to promote repeat applications.

Brainstorming: A commonly used group problem-solving technique whose goal is to generate as many solutions to a problem as possible.

Community of practice: An affinity group or information network that provides a forum where members can exchange tips and generate ideas; a group of professionals who come together to address common problems and who strive to improve their profession and thereby themselves. An informal network or forum where tips are exchanged and ideas are generated. A group of professionals informally bound to one another through exposure to a common class of problems, common pursuit of solutions, and thereby themselves embodying a store of knowledge. A group of practitioners held together by shared practices and common beliefs.

Content management: The processes and workflows involved in organizing, categorizing and structuring information resources so that they can be stored, published and reused in multiple ways. A content management system is used to collect, manage and publish content; it stores content either as components or whole documents, in such a way as to maintain the links between components. "Content" in this context generally refers to computer-based information such as the content of a website or a database. Content management is about making sure that content is relevant, up to date, accurate, easily accessible and well organized, so that quality information is delivered to the user.

Core competency: Set of skills that confer a competitive advantage on an organization; required to carry out the mission-critical business of the organization.

Corporate memory: All the information, data and know-how that a company possesses; accumulation of historical events and experiences. The knowledge and understanding embedded in an organization's people, processes, products or services as well as its traditions and values. Organizational memory can either assist or inhibit the organization's progress.

Data: Directly observable or directly verifiable facts.

Explicit knowledge: Knowledge that has been rendered visible (usually through transcription into a document or an audio/visual recording); typically, captured and codified knowledge.

Innovation: Innovation is a new idea applied to initiating or improving a product, process or service. All innovations involve change, but not all changes necessarily involve new ideas or lead to significant improvements.

* The specific terminology relating to knowledge management is available in almost all knowledge management strategies and toolkits developed by United Nations system organizations. For the sake of consistency, the terms contained in this glossary have been extracted and adapted from Kimiz Dalkir, *Knowledge management in theory and practice* (Elsevier, 2005). The glossary only contains terms used throughout the present report.

Intellectual asset/capital: The recorded information of an organization and, increasingly, human talent itself. Such information is typically either inefficiently warehoused or simply lost, especially in large, physically dispersed organizations. An asset is a claim to future benefits (value, cash flows). An intangible asset can be defined as a non-physical claim to future value or benefits. Intangibles, intangible assets, knowledge assets and intellectual capital are more or less synonyms.

Knowledge: Subjective and valuable information that has been validated and organized into a mental model; typically originates from accumulated experience; incorporates perceptions, beliefs and values.

Knowledge acquisition: The process of extracting, transforming and transferring expertise from a knowledge source.

Knowledge audit: A more qualitative evaluation; essentially a sound investigation into an organization's knowledge "health". The knowledge audit provides an evidence-based assessment of where the organization needs to focus its knowledge management efforts. It can reveal the organization's knowledge management needs, strengths, weakness, opportunities, threats and risks.

Knowledge broker: A person who facilitates the creation, sharing and use of knowledge in an organization.

Knowledge centre: A place where knowledge is gathered and stored and can be accessed and used by other people for knowledge sharing.

Knowledge management: The deliberate and systematic coordination of the people, technology, processes and structure of an organization in order to add value through reuse and innovation. This is achieved through promoting the creation, sharing and application of knowledge as well as through the feeding of valuable lessons learned and best practices into corporate memory.

Knowledge manager: A role with developmental and operational responsibility for promoting and implementing knowledge management principles and practices.

Knowledge repository: A place to store and retrieve explicit knowledge. A low-tech knowledge repository could be a set of file folders; while a high-tech repository might be based on a database platform.

Learning organization: An organization that possesses the practices, systems and culture that actively promotes the sharing of experiences and lessons learned to encourage quality performance and continuous improvement.

Lessons learned: Knowledge that results from an after-the-fact analysis of a project or new technique, or the application of a new knowledge; the "opposites" of best practices – they are caveats, hard-earned experiences of unsuccessful endeavours that should be disseminated widely throughout an organization in order to prevent the same mistakes from being made again or to ensure that valuable innovations are not lost. A work practice or experience that is captured and shared to avoid a recurrence.

Organizational knowledge: A complex network of knowledge and knowledge sets held by an organization and consisting of declarative and procedural rules.

Organizational learning: A process involved in human interaction, knowledge claim formulation and validation by which new organizational knowledge is created. The ability of an organization to learn from past behaviour and information and to improve as a result. The capture and use of organizational knowledge to make organizational decision making more efficient and effective.

Organizational memory: Knowledge is the key asset of the knowledge organization. Organizational memory extends and amplifies this asset by capturing, organizing, disseminating and reusing the knowledge created by its staff.

Portal: A site that the owner positions as an entrance to other sites on the Internet; a gateway whose purpose is to be the major starting point for users when they connect to the web.

Social capital: The value created when a community or society collaborates and cooperates, through mechanisms such as networks, shared trust, norms and values, to achieve mutual benefits. The benefits of social capital flow from the trust, reciprocity, information, and cooperation associated with social networks.

Tacit knowledge: Knowledge that is very difficult to articulate, put into words or images, typically highly internalized knowledge such as knowing how to do something or recognizing analogous situations.

Attachment 2

Overview of actions to be taken by participating organizations on the recommendations of the Joint Inspection Unit
JIU/REP/2016/10

		Intended impact	United Nations, its funds and programmes															Specialized agencies and IAEA											
			CEB	United Nations*	UNAIDS	UNCTAD	ITC	UNDP	UNEP	UNFPA	UN-Habitat	UNHCR	UNICEF	UNODC	UNOPS	UNRWA	UN-Women	WFP	FAO	IAEA	ICAO	ILO	IMO	ITU	UNESCO	UNIDO	UNWTO	UPU	WHO	WIPO	WMO
Report	For action		☐	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒	☒
	For information		☒	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
Recommendation 1		h		E	E	E	E			E		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E		E		E	E		E	E	E	E		E
Recommendation 2		d		E																											
Recommendation 3		e		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 4		h		E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E	E
Recommendation 5		c		E																											
Recommendation 6		b						E												E		E								
Recommendation 7		d		L																											

Legend: **L:** Recommendation for decision by legislative organ **E:** Recommendation for action by executive head
■ : Recommendation does not require action by this organization

Intended impact: **a:** enhanced transparency and accountability **b:** dissemination of good/best practices **c:** enhanced coordination and cooperation **d:** strengthened coherence and harmonization **e:** enhanced control and compliance **f:** enhanced effectiveness **g:** significant financial savings **h:** enhanced efficiency **i:** other

* As listed in ST/SGB/2015/3.